

# CHRISTIANITY

Justified upon the  
**Scripture Foundation.**

BEING

A summary View of the Controversy  
between CHRISTIANS and DEISTS.

In TWO PARTS.

In which the Subject Matter of the Gospel Revelation is vindicated against Objections; and the Evidence for the Truth of the Christian Religion briefly stated.

Preached in several Sermons (but now digested into one continued Discourse) for the Lecture founded by the Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, Esq. in the Parish Church of *St. Mary le Bow*, in the Years 1747, 1748, 1749.

BY

HENRY STEBBING, D. D.

Chancellor of the Diocese of *Sarum*, and Chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty.

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SHIPSTATION

To the Right Honourable

Richard Earl of Burlington

Sole surviving TRUSTEE for the

LECTURE

Hon. ROBERT WYLLIE, Esq.



The Director

Most obedient humble servant

HARRY STERRING.

To the Right Honourable

*Richard Earl of Burlington,*

Sole surviving TRUSTEE for the

L E C T U R E

Appointed by the

Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, Esq.

This Discourse is inscribed,

By his Lordship's

Most obedient humble Servant,

HENRY STEBBING.

To the Right Honourable

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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HENRY STURGEON

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my Expectation; and flatter myself that I have done a public Service, at a time when every Help is wanted to check the Growth of Infidelity.

I think that the proper Work of a Defender of CHRISTIANITY is, to defend it upon the foot that *Christ* taught it, that is, upon the foot of *Natural Religion*. Natural Religion is and must be the Foundation of all Religions; and in this Sense *Jesus Christ* was a Teacher of Natural Religion, as he required the Practice of it. But his MESSAGE was *Pardon* and *Reconciliation* to Sinners, which is the proper Subject of his Revelation. With this I set out; and, the common Principles of Natural Religion *supposed*,

I write

## P R E F A C E. vii

I write as to those who, thus far instructed, want only to be informed, what it is that the Gospel proposes, which natural Light cannot open to us. In setting this forth I have made use of Scripture Authorities; but in this I have paid a due regard to the Direction of the honourable Founder, which is, not to enter into Contests upon any Points in which Christians of different Communions or Persuasions differ among themselves; but so far only appealed to Scripture, as is necessary to shew, that the Doctrines I am defending are the real Doctrines of *Christ* and his Apostles; and not Doctrines of my own Invention.

In answering the Objections against Christianity, instead of ran-

sacking the many Books lately published by Unbelievers, and following particular Authors in their particular Methods of reasoning (which would have made this Work tedious and less instructive) I have delivered my own plain Sense as I had digested it in my Mind, from what I have formerly read and considered upon this Subject. I do not pretend (which would be great Presumption) to have cleared up all Difficulties in the Christian Scheme; but I hope I have answered all Objections, which, as a Christian Preacher, I am concerned to answer; either by shewing, that there are no real Difficulties in such Objections; or if there are, that the Christian Religion is no more concerned in them than Natural Religion

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# PREFACE. ix

gion is. Natural Religion has its Difficulties as well as Revealed; and they are much of the same sort. It is therefore a just Demand upon those who believe in a God and a Providence, though there are Difficulties which they cannot clear; that they accept the Gospel (supposing it supported by sufficient Evidence) with the same Allowance. I suppose, that every one who believes a God, whilst he sees Difficulties in accounting for the various Methods of his Providence, does it upon this general Principle, that the common Appearances of Nature are a much better Evidence for his Existence, than those Difficulties (which may arise merely from the narrow Limits of the human Understanding) are to shew  
the



## \* PREFACE.

the contrary. If this should turn out to be the Case with respect to Revelation (as I trust it will) we are then upon a *Par*; and it will be quite absurd, whilst you admit the one with all its Difficulties, on account of the same or like Difficulties, to reject the other.

In the second part of this Work, where I lay together the *Evidence* of the Truth of *Christ's* Mission, Dr. MIDDLETON, in his *Introductory Discourse* and *Free Enquiry*, has furnished me with some Employment. These Pieces, as to their professed Intention and Design (which is to shew that there were no Miracles wrought after the Times of *Christ* and his Apostles) are out of my Subject. But

## PREFACE. xi

as the Doctor, in managing that Argument, has advanced several *general Positions*, which in their *Consequences* impeach the Authority of the New Testament, he *so far* fell within my Province; and *so far only* have I concerned myself with him.

As my Appointment was limited to a certain Period which I could not exceed, and my Subject comprehends a Variety of Matters; I was obliged to be very short upon each particular Point. But if what I have said is plain and convincing, Brevity, I hope, will not be thought a Fault; and in whatever Light this Book may stand in the Opinion of Unbelievers (with whom, I am afraid, lit-

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the good is to be done) if the doubtful and wavering may be established by it; or the serious, but less instructed Christian, who wants only to be enabled to *give Reason of the Hope that is in him*, may receive any Satisfaction from it; I shall think my Pains well employed.

12 JY 62

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E R R A T A.

Page 78. lin. 1. instead of *because they are immaterial*, read, *supposing them Substances of a distinct Nature, endued with Powers and Faculties, that have (essentially) no Dependence upon the organical Body.* Page 127. lin. penult. in the Note, for *Dialogus* read *Dialog.* Page 128. lin. 21. for *Bus* read *But.* Page 159. lin. 15. for *Pharisee* read *Pharisee's.* Page 241. lin. 6. for *Master* read *Maker.* Page 249. lin. 5. transpose *those* for *these*, and *vice versa.* Page 251. lin. 10. after *cease*, instead of a Point of *Interrogation* put a *Colon.* Page 255. lin. 11. instead of *Corruption* read *corruptible.* Page 316. lin. 6. for *Judea* read *Judah.* Ibid. lin. antepenult. for *Lastly* read *Besides.* Page 442. lin. 2. dele *as well,*





# CHRISTIANITY

Justified upon the  
Scripture Foundation.

## PART I.

SHewing

The CREDIBILITY of the GOSPEL.

WHOEVER offers any thing as of Use or Advantage to Mankind, he has a Right to set forth his own Pretensions; and according to the Reason, Importance, and Credibility, of the Matters proposed, and the Evidence a Person gives of his Abilities and Capacity to bring them to Effect; he will deserve or not deserve the public Attention. It is according to the full Force and Virtue of this Maxim (universally admitted in all cases)

*The Pretensions  
of Jesus Christ  
set forth from  
Scripture.*

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that

## 2 *The Pretensions of Jesus Christ*

that I purpose to consider the Pretensions of JESUS CHRIST, in order to determine the grand Question between Us and Unbelievers; "Was he a Prophet sent from God; and are his Doctrines and Precepts to be received as the Will and Law of God?" I shall consider, I say, first, the *subject Matter* of his Doctrine; or *what* it is that he proposes to us for our Acceptance, and of what *Use* or *Importance* it is, Regard being had to the Happiness of Mankind, or the wise Ends of God's Providence, so far as they may appear to human Reason. I shall consider, secondly, the *Credibility* of this Doctrine in *itself* or in its *own Nature*; whether it be such as recommends itself to our Acceptance, if supported by proper and sufficient Evidence of its coming from God; or whether there is in it any such Contrariety to the natural Dictates of our Reason as will justify us in rejecting it as incapable of Proof. If there is no such Contrariety, then, 3dly, it shall be considered, what *Testimony* God has given to *Jesus Christ*, and whether it be such as ought to convince and satisfy reasonable Men. This Distribution of the following Work will take



take in all necessary Questions, and bring the Dispute to a regular Conclusion. For thus it may be argued. The Wisdom of God does nothing in vain. Therefore if the Gospel, as to the *subject Matter* of it, be of no Importance, it cannot be from God. Again. Nothing that contradicts the Reason of Man can be from God; because the Reason of Man, so far as it goes, is the Wisdom of God imparted or communicated to Man, and God cannot contradict *himself*. It is necessary therefore that both the Importance of the Gospel, and its Consonancy to the Principles of natural Light, be made appear, in order to come at this previous Conclusion, that the Gospel *may* possibly, or probably, be from God. But that it actually *is* so, it is the *Testimony* that God has given to *Jesus Christ*, that must shew; and if it *does* shew it, the Reason of Man has nothing farther to demand, in order to make Faith a reasonable Conviction.

As to the first Question, "What is the "*subject Matter* of Christ's Doctrine, or "what is it that he proposes to us for our "Acceptance?" You must take the An-



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swer to it from Christ himself, or those whom he commissioned to publish his Doctrine to the World: You can have it no where else. If the Question was, What is the Law of *England*, must it not be let forth from our Law-books and Statutes? What then does Christ say? *The Son of Man* (meaning HIMSELF) is come to save *that which was lost*; that is, *lost Mankind*: For so it is said, *John iii. 17. God sent his Son into the World—that THE WORLD through him might be saved.* This is the great, distinguishing Character of *Jesus Christ*, that he is THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD; and for the full Explanation of it, it will be necessary to shew from the New Testament, how and in what Sense Mankind were *lost*, and how and in what Sense they are *saved* by Christ; for these Points, once particularly explained and understood as laid down in these Writings; both the *subject Matter* of the Gospel and the *Importance* of it, will be fully understood, which were the Points to be cleared, under this first head of our Enquiry.

St.

*St. Paul* then tells us, that whereas Man in his first, original, State, was created to Immortality and Happiness; *Adam*, by transgressing the Law of his Creator, brought Death and Misery upon himself, and all his Posterity. Thus, *Rom. v. 12. By one Man Sin entered into the World and Death by Sin, and so Death passed upon all Men. And 1 Cor. xv. 22. In Adam all die.* This agrees with the History of the Old Testament, to which these Passages most evidently refer. For there it is said, that God put the Man whom he had formed, into the Garden of Eden—and commanded him saying, Of every Tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die, *Gen. ii. 8. 16, 17.* The Event shews the Meaning of this Threatning to have been, not that *Adam* should instantly die, but that he should become mortal; which supposes him to have been created immortal. But *Adam* sinned and became mortal, he and his Posterity then in his Loyns, as the Event also shewed,

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and the Apostle farther enforces, *Rom. v. 17, 18. By one Man's Offence Death reigned — By the Offence of one Judgment came upon all Men.* *Adam* lived his appointed Time, and then returned to the Dust from whence he was taken, *Gen. iii. 19.* But by God's Appointment he did not die till he had sown the Seeds of Generations to come, who being born in his Corruption, followed him (as it was natural to be expected) in the Example of his Disobedience. The very first-born Son of *Adam* was a Murderer; and as Men multiplied upon the Face of the Earth, Transgressions multiplied with them, and at last prevailed to that Degree, that it repented the Lord that he had made Man on the Earth, which brought on the Flood that destroyed them; all but *Noah* and his Family, who, by the special Providence of God, were preserved alive, to raise a new World out of the Ruins of the old one.

All I shall say of this second Race of Men is, that they grew by degrees as bad as the first. Idolatry (that foul Monster, fertile of every thing that is odious to God) soon lifted up her head, and spread Corruption and



and Wickedness over the whole Earth. St. Paul hath said no more than what all History confirms, when speaking of the Gentiles he tells us, that they were become vain in their Imaginations, and had changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things, Rom. i. 21, 23. Idolatry was the prevailing Sin of the World; and as false Notions of the Deity naturally produce a wrong Behaviour, so it was here. For, as the Apostle goes on, ver. 24. God gave them up to Uncleaness — unto vile Affections — to a reprobate Mind — to Fornication, Covetousness, Murder, Deceit, and all kinds of Wickedness. Nor was the Case much better among the Jews; for though, by the very Institution of their Republick, they were tied down to the Worship of the one true God, yet (as their History shews) they frequently revolted from him to the Service of Idols. And though their great Prophet and Leader, Moses, had very strongly enforced the natural Law in all its Branches, yet were they greatly defective in Duties of the moral kind, supposing (as it should seem)



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that great Punctuality and Exactness, in ritual Performances, would make good the Defect; for which they are severely reprov-  
ed by St. Paul, Rom. ii. 17. *Behold! thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the Law, and makest thy Boast of God, and art confident that thou thyself art a Guide of the Blind, a Light of them which are in Darkness—Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a Man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a Man should not commit Adultery, dost thou commit Adultery? Thou that abhorrest Idols, dost thou commit Sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God? For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.*

Here then you see in all Mankind a general Revolt from the Law of God. Some gave away his Glory to the Workmanship of his Hands. Others, who knew God, served their own Lusts and vile Affections; and such was the Extent of this Corruption, that the Apostle pronounces absolutely (without Exception or Reserve) *ALL have sinned*

*sinned, and come short of the Glory of God—there is none righteous; no not one, Rom. iii. 10, 23.* And it is to be observed, that he does not treat this Revolt as an excusable Case, but as what subjected them to the just Judgment of God. As to the *Jews*, they had a written Law, acknowledged and admitted by themselves, against which they were Sinners; in consequence whereof the Apostle represents them, as *treasuring up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who will render to every Man according to his Deeds.* Rom. ii. 5, 6. And though the *Gentiles* had no Law written upon *Tables of Stone*, as the *Jews* had; yet they had a Law written in their *Hearts*. God had manifested his own Being and Perfection in the Works of the Creation, as it is said, Chap. i. verse 19, 20. *That which may be known of God is manifest in [or among] them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without Excuse.* And in the

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the next Chapter he says, that when the Gentiles which have not the Law [meaning the written Law] do by Nature the Things contained in the Law, these having not the Law are a Law unto themselves, which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing, one another, Rom. ii. 14, 15.

It is very true (and the Apostle here directly charges it upon the Gentiles) that in fact both the true Knowledge of God, and also of the natural Law, was in a great measure lost among them. But this he considers as (chiefly) the Effect of their own wilfull Corruptions, and supposes, that God had given such Evidences of himself by the Works of the Creation and stamped such legible Impressions of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, in the Hearts of Men, by the Reason and Understanding which he had given them; that, had they been honestly consulted and attended to, they would have directed them to another kind of Behaviour. God may well be spoken of as  
having



*set forth from Scripture.* II

having manifested, or shewed himself to the *Gentiles*, if he vouchsafed them that Light which (if rightly used) would have made him manifest, though (for lack of Care and Attention) the far greater Part of Mankind were very grossly mistaken in their Notions concerning him and his Worship. At least it is certain, that amidst all the Corruptions that prevailed in the *Gentile* World, there was a Foundation left for more Religion and Virtue than was commonly practised; otherwise I do not see how the Apostle will be justified in pronouncing them *without Excuse*.

You have now the Scripture Account, in what Sense Mankind was *lost*. Under the Forfeiture of Life and Immortality through the Sin of *Adam*; and moreover, through their own personal Sins and Corruptions, obnoxious to God's Wrath and Condemnation. The next thing propounded was to shew in what Sense (according to the same Scripture) Mankind is saved by *Jesus Christ*.

The most natural Conception is, that as Immortality was lost in *Adam*, it is restored  
to



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to us again, in *Christ*: That as, by Sin; we are obnoxious to Wrath and Condemnation; in him we have Remission, and Reconciliation with God. This is *saving that which was lost* in the full Extent of the Expression; and this is the true State of the Case. For what says *Christ*? *I am the Door*; BY ME if any Man enter he shall be saved.— I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, *John* x. 9, 10. Again, *John* 27, 28. *My Sheep hear my Voice, and they follow me, and I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE.* And at *Chap.* xvii. *John* 2. *Christ* declares, that God had given him Power over all *Flesh*, that HE SHOULD GIVE ETERNAL LIFE to as many as should believe in him. But how does *Christ* give eternal Life? Not by disannulling the Law of Mortality (which still remains to be the Lot of all the Sons of *Adam*) but by the RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. For so says *Christ* himself; *This is the Will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have EVERLASTING LIFE; and I WILL RAISE HIM UP at the last Day,* *John* vi. 40. And it is well to be observed, that this abundant Grace  
and

and Favour of God towards lost and sinful Man, is set forth by our Saviour as the Fruit or Effect of his Death and Sufferings. *The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM for many, Matt. xx. 28.*

—This Doctrine (at first succinctly delivered by our *Lord Christ*) is largely insisted upon and strongly urged by his Apostles, and particularly by St. *Paul*, from whom I shall cite these few following Passages to serve instead of many. *Since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection from the Dead: For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.* And *Rom. v. 11, 12. We joy in God thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the ATONEMENT. Wherefore as by one Man [Adam] Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, and so Death passed upon all Men* — Here the Apostle stops short, and leaves this, or something to this Effect, to be supplied. — *Even so by one Man [Jesus Christ] Sin and Death shall be destroyed.* For thus it follows; *as by the OFFENCE of one, JUDGMENT came upon all Men*

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*Men to CONDEMNATION; even so by the  
RIGHTEOUSNESS of one the FREE GIFT  
came upon all Men unto JUSTIFICATION.*—

*That as Sin hath reigned unto Death, even  
so might Grace reign through Righteousness  
unto eternal Life, BY Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Y 18, 21. All this implies that Christ hath  
restored to Mankind what was lost by A-  
dam's Transgression: Restored (I say) by his  
offering himself as a RANSOM for us all.*

*All (says he) have sinned, and come short of  
the Glory of God; being justified freely by his  
Grace, through the REDEMPTION that is in  
Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be  
a PROPITIATION thro' Faith in his Blood,  
—for the Remission of Sins that are past,  
Rom. iii. 23—25.*

One Thing yet, fundamentally material,  
is to be taken notice of, viz. that this Grace  
and Favour of God in Jesus Christ belongs  
to those, and to those only, who being obe-  
dient to the heavenly Call, shall return back  
to the Law from whence they have swerved,  
and serve God by true Repentance.  
The subject Matter of the Preaching of  
John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare  
the



the Way for Christ, was **REPENTANCE**. Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.— And now also the Ax is laid unto the Root of the Tree; therefore every Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the Fire, Matt. iii. 2. 10. Jesus himself began with the same Lesson, Chap. iv. 17. and declares it to be the End of his coming to call Sinners to **REPENTANCE**, Chap. ix. 13. And to this End it was that he chose his Apostles, and sent them forth into all the World, that **REPENTANCE** and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name among all Nations, Luke xxiv. 47. What our Lord appointed them to, that the Apostles punctually executed; they went out every where, preaching that Men should **REPENT**, and believe the Gospel, offering the Hope of **ETERNAL LIFE** to those who should obey, and threatening **ETERNAL CONDEMNATION** to the Disobedient.

From this short and general Account of the Gospel, we see plainly that Christianity presupposes Natural Religion, and stands upon it as its Foundation. For if all had

*sinned*



*sinned and come short of the Glory of God,* there must have been a Law by which all Men were originally bound; *for where there is no Law there is no Transgression.* Therefore such Principles as these, that there is a God and a Providence—that there is a natural, essential Difference between Right and Wrong—and that Man is a moral and accountable Agent, are Principles which Mankind are presumed generally to have been instructed in, antecedently to the preaching of the Gospel; and the Apostles treat Mankind as if they had been, or might have been, so instructed. For they nowhere set themselves forth as offering the first Notices of God to his Creatures, but refer to him as having already manifested himself by the Works of the Creation; nor do they treat the natural Law, as a Law wanting any obligatory Force, which the Authority of God, speaking in and by them, was to supply; but they charge Mankind directly with being Sinners against it, and being held under Condemnation merely as having acted against that Sense of Good and Evil, which every Man must feel who hath not corrupted himself by evil Habits,  
and

and given himself a Nature that God never gave him. The Truth is, that the Belief of the Deity must stand upon natural Evidence, and can stand upon nothing else. For those supernatural Manifestations which prove a Revelation, presuppose the Being of God as evident from the common Appearances of Nature, or they are of no Force. If you believe that there is a God, Miracles will prove his Power and Presence to such or such particular Purposes: But if you can account for common Appearances without a Deity, you may as well account for uncommon Appearances without him too; there being nothing more in the one to prove a God, than there is in the other. In like manner, as to the natural Law; Revelation may approve, and confirm what Reason dictates, as every true Revelation does and must: But it cannot change the Natural Law so as to make it any other Thing than what it is in itself, nor can it offer any thing that is in its Nature more excellent; for he that fulfils the whole Moral Law, acts fully up to the Dignity and Perfection of his Nature. The Natural

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Law may be imperfectly understood, or the Natural Law may be neglected; but supposing a Man in all Points to see what is right, according to the Situation and Circumstances in which Nature places him, and to act agreeably to such Apprehensions; he will be the very Creature that God intended he should be. The most perfect of created Beings can do nothing more.

But the Case, as we have seen, was otherwise. All were Sinners; and this it was that opened the Way for the Work of the Gospel, which (in the Scripture Account) was and is to serve as an INSTRUMENT to restore the Obedience of the Natural Law, and Mankind, who had departed from it. For though God *had not left himself without Witness*; Men had blinded their Eyes, and did not see the Evidences of his *Power and Godhead*. Though they had a *Law written in their Hearts*, their Lusts and Passions, which had gained the Dominion over them, had greatly effaced those natural Characters. To all this the Gospel

Gospel offers a Remedy; and the Reasonableness and Fitness of this Remedy, and the Grounds upon which it stands, is what I shall undertake, in these Discourses, to justify against Unbelievers; leaving the Principles of Natural Religion (as *Christ* and his Apostles did) to rest upon their own natural Evidence. In order to this, it will be necessary to have the general Plan of Christianity, which I have now laid before you, perpetually in View, and trace it minutely through all its several Parts; there being scarce one of them which, in its turn, has not been excepted against. If these Exceptions shall appear to be weak and inconclusive, and the Gospel be found to be in itself credible, we shall then be properly prepared to proceed to the Evidence; to which every reasonable Man will find himself concerned to pay all due Attention, since, supposing it should come out to be full and sufficient, the Dignity and Importance of the Gospel will be visible to all the World. If there be any thing that becomes the Goodness of the Supreme Being, it is (by Ways suitable to his Wisdom) to put his Creatures into a Capacity



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city of being acceptable to himself; and the most careless Man upon Earth cannot surely think it an indifferent Matter, whether he embraces the Offers of God's Mercy, to his eternal Happiness, or rejects them, to his everlasting Condemnation.

Let us consider, then, whether the Method proposed by the Gospel, and which has already been laid before you, be, in the Nature of it, a Method suitable to the Wisdom of God. By which my Meaning is not, to inquire, whether there is nothing in the great Work of our Redemption, but what our Reason fully and perfectly comprehends. It is granted there are many things in it which are beyond human Comprehension; and the Apostle confesses as much, when he calls the Gospel *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery*<sup>a</sup>. But the Point is, whether, so far as we *do* know and understand of what the Gospel proposes, there is any just Reason to find Fault; or whether there be any Thing which bears a *Contrariety* to our natural Notions or Conceptions of Things. If there is nothing of this Sort, we ought to be satisfied:

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 7.

For to demand it as a Condition of our believing the Gospel, that it proposes nothing that human Reason cannot fathom, is in Effect, and by Construction, to make human Wisdom the Measure and Standard of the Wisdom of God. For if it be granted that the Wisdom of God may see Reasons for many Things, which the Wisdom of Man, by the Force of its own natural Operations, cannot; the Conclusion must be, that our not comprehending the Reason and Fitness of what he proposes as the Object of our Faith, can be no Objection against our believing it; unless you will say, that God has no Right to demand our Reliance upon his Veracity, but is bound, in all the Ways of his Providence with regard to Mankind, to explain the Reasons of his Proceedings; which is a most gross Impeachment of almost every Perfection of his Nature, and nothing short of denying him to be God. If God made and governs the World, it is very certain that he does *not* thus act in many Cases: For search the infinite Variety of natural Effects, and see how few of the Causes lye within our Reach. And if the Reasons of Things lye hid in

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the natural World, how likely is it that they should do so in those kind of Providences which concern the moral Conduct of Men, and the Methods of bringing them to that Happiness which is to be the Reward of that Virtue which consists in paying him Honour, and Reverence, and Trust, and a filial Obedience? Such Objectors as these, therefore, have no Right to be heard; nor (that I may take notice of it once for all) shall I admit any Exception to the Gospel as legitimate and pertinent, which holds as strongly against Natural Religion, the Truth of which the very Question supposes, and is admitted in the Argument by those with whom alone I am concerned. If a Man is an *Atheist*, let him say so, and we must go another Way to work. But if any serious and religious Person finds a Difficulty in reconciling these Things to Reason, to such I shall apply myself, and endeavour to give the best Satisfaction to their Doubts that I am able.

*Of the Fall and its Consequences.* I must begin with the History of the Fall, and its Consequences; for this is the Foundation of the Doctrine

Doctrine of the *Redemption*, and if the Foundation itself cannot stand, the Superstructure must necessarily fall to the Ground. The History is to be found in the Third Chapter of the Book of *Genesis*, in which there are two Things of principal Account, *viz.* the *Temptation*, and the *Sentence*. As to the *Temptation*, it was by the *Serpent* first seducing the *Woman* to eat of the Fruit of the forbidden Tree; which Circumstance is distinctly vouched by *St. Paul*, 2 Cor. xi. 3. *I fear lest by any Means, as the SERPENT beguiled EVE through his Subtilty, so your Minds should be corrupted, &c.* which Unbelievers are wont to look upon as a very ridiculous Story; and some Christians (it should seem) have been so ill reconciled to it in its obvious and literal Sense, as to turn the whole into Allegory. Those who best like this Way of interpreting, are welcome to it; for the Truth of Christianity is not at all concerned in the Question. If *Moses* wrote this as an Allegory, *St. Paul* may also be supposed to have referred to it as an Allegory; for he does not explain how he understood it. But as my own Judgment inclines to the literal Sense, I shall undertake to



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justify the History in the literal Sense; which will be placing the Dispute upon a Bottom, which, I conceive, Unbelievers will judge to be the fairest; because the having Recourse to Allegory has the Appearance of avoiding Difficulties instead of answering them.

It is well understood, I presume, that those who take this History in the literal Sense, do not suppose that it was the mere brute Animal that tempted Eve, but the Serpent actuated by the Devil. The Author of the *Book of Wisdom* says, that *through the Envy of the Devil came Death into the World*, Chap. ii. ver. 24. And it should seem to be in Allusion to this very History, that our Saviour<sup>b</sup> says of the Devil, that *he was a Murderer from the Beginning*, John viii. 44. and that St. John calls the Devil, *the old Serpent which deceiveth the whole World*, Rev. xii. 9. These Passages may serve as Evidence to shew it to have been the Sense of the Jewish Church, that the Devil tempted Eve; and will any one pre-

<sup>b</sup> Of our Saviour's Sense of this Matter see more in the learned Bishop of London's Appendix, p. 21.

tend to say that this is incredible? Will you undertake to shew, against the Authority of Scripture, that there is no such Being as the Devil? Or can you settle the Limits of his Power? Suppose then this to have been the Case, that the Devil tempted *Eve*; and that he did it, not by assuming the Form of a Serpent, but (as the History seems plainly to carry it) by making use of a real Serpent, as his Organ or Instrument; there will then, in the whole Story, be no more of Figure than this one (which is a very common one) the *Instrument* put for the *Agent*. The Scripture Language runs—*the Serpent said*, so or so: and so we talk every Day—*the Poppet said* this or that; when the Speech is not the Speech of the *Machine*, but of the Man behind the Curtain. But the great Difficulty is to account how the Woman could be deceived by such an Instrument.

Some have supposed, that *Eve* mistook the Serpent for some heavenly Messenger; and to make way for this Notion have observed, that before the Fall the Serpent was not that frightful Creature it is now, but mild and

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and gentle; not crawling and winding about upon the Ground, but lofty, and going upright upon his Feet. Or else, that he was a flying Serpent, having Wings, and shining brightly like Fire. The Scripture mentions *flying, fiery* Serpents, which are called *Seraphim*, the very Name given to the highest Order of Angels; whence it is conjectured, that these Angels appeared to Men in the Form of those Serpents. The Devil therefore (say they) made use of some such Serpent, that he might resemble one of the most illustrious Angels, which moved *Eve* the more readily to attend to his Discourse; taking him to be one of the heavenly *Seraphims*, which she had seen sometimes in such splendid Form, attending upon the divine Glory<sup>c</sup>.

That the Serpent was debased as to his outward Form after the Fall, the Scripture very plainly supposes. *Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all Cattle, and above every Beast of the Field; up-*

\* See Bishop *Patrick*, and the Authors of *Univ. Hist.*

*on thy Belly shalt thou go, and Dust shalt thou eat all the Days of thy Life, Gen. iii.*

14. What his Form was before, is a Thing quite uncertain. That he did not crawl upon the Ground, is clear; for to say, *upon thy Belly shalt thou go*, implies, that till then he did not go upon his Belly; and where else was the Curse? But, of whatever Form this Serpent was, that *Eve* mistook him for a heavenly Messenger, is a Supposition not to be admitted: For had this been the Case, she would naturally afterwards have pleaded, in justification of her having eaten, that, in her Apprehension, God had reversed his own Law, and that she had his Permission (signified to her by his Minister) for what she had done. But she pleads no such Matter; but when God said, *What hast thou done?* She confesses her Fault, and lays the blame upon the Serpent, who had seduced her. *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat, Gen. iii. 13.* This shews that she took it to be a Serpent that spake to her, and not a Messenger from Heaven.

Be this admitted; and let us next consider in what Light this must have appeared  
to



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to *Eve*. It is not to be imagined, that *she* knew any thing of a Spirit (whether good or evil) actuating the Serpent. She saw nothing but a Serpent; and what must she have thought? Why, either that the Serpent naturally had the Gifts of Speech and Reason, or that he had not. To suppose the first, may seem to fasten upon *Eve* a Degree of Credulity incredible. But lay aside Prejudice, and the Wonder perhaps may cease. In *our* Way of thinking the Ideas of Speech and Reason (as natural Gifts) will not consist with the Idea of any earthly Creature but what is human. But how are we certain that *Eve* had, or could have had the same Notion? That the Serpent was not a human Creature she well knew; but it is very far from being certain, that she knew as well, that, naturally, none of the Creatures which she saw, had Speech and Reason, her Husband and herself excepted. We know that Man alone has naturally the Gifts of Speech and Reason; but how do we know it? Why, by that Experience and Observation which it is not necessary to be supposed that *Eve* had, at the Time when the Serpent accosted her.

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Some Writers have maintained, that the Serpent had, originally, the Gifts both of Speech and Reason, but lost them by the Curse. I will not answer for the Truth of this; nor does it seem to stand with the Scripture Account, which gives not *Reason* to the Serpent but *Subtilty*, in common with other Brutes. But this I may venture to say, that no body can prove, that, in the Circumstances under which *Eve* then was; she might not have Cause sufficient to induce her to think, that (naturally) the Serpent had the Gifts both of Speech and Reason. The History does not intimate, that *Eve* was at all familiarized to this Creature which is called a Serpent. She might have known so much of his outward Form as to distinguish him from other Brutes. And if she had remarked (as, it is natural to think, she must have remarked) in him the Tokens of a *superior Subtilty*; this must have prepared her to have believed him to be a reasonable Creature, when upon his (perhaps *first*) near Approach to her, she heard him discourse and reason. If you could even now suppose a Person  
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so much a Stranger to the World, as to know nothing, by his own Observation, or by Information from others, of the Powers of the Brute Creation ; it would be impossible for him immediately to determine whether a Dog, or a Monkey, and many other Creatures, had not the Gifts of Speech and Reason. There is no Evidence that *Eve* had either Observation or Information sufficient to satisfy her in this Case ; and it is not at all a hard Supposition that she had not. The Interval that had passed between her Formation and her Fall, might have been<sup>d</sup> too short for her to have informed

<sup>d</sup> If we might be allowed to depart from the commonly received Opinion, and place the Formation of *Eve* at some Distance of Time from the Creation of *Adam*, there will be room enough to suppose that *Eve* had very little Knowledge of the Works of the Creation, when the Serpent attempted her, how much soever her Husband might have had. The Second Chapter of *Genesis* looks very much this Way : for there the placing *Adam* in the Garden of Paradise, where he is spoken of as wanting a *Help meet*—the Prohibition of the Use of the Tree of Knowledge—the calling together the Beasts and Fowls for *Adam* to give them Names ; are mentioned as prior to *Eve*'s Formation : All which seem to be too great a Variety herself

herself, or to have been instructed by her Husband, if he indeed was able to have instructed her, which is a great deal more than can be proved. He knew that he was superior in Dignity to all other Creatures, because he had Dominion given him over of Incidents to be taken into the sixth Day's Creation, unless (which will suit my Purpose as well) you will say with Mr. *Whiston*, that the six Days in which the World was created, was six Years. Nor is the Scripture clear on the other hand, that the Formation of *Eve* was within the six Days. For though it is said in the Account of the six Days Work (Chap. i. verse 27) that God created Man *Male and Female*; it will no more certainly follow, that the Female was THEN created, than it will certainly follow, that the Appointment of the Sabbath was coeval with the Creation because the Account of its Appointment stands connected with the History of the Creation. The sacred Historian is not a nice Observer of Order and Method in this Narration, as every one who reads it, will easily perceive. The strongest Proof that *Adam* and *Eve* were both created on the sixth Day, is its being said, that *on the seventh Day God rested from ALL his Work*. But general Expressions are not always to be understood without Limitation; and it is not here said (absolutely) that God rested from ALL his Works, but that he rested from all his Works which he had made, which it might be very allowable to say, though it was supposed that *Eve* was not then made, but some Time after. You will observe, that  
them;



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them; and we read of him, that God brought unto him every Beast of the Field, &c. to see what he would call them, Gen. ii. 19. But if Adam gave Names to all living Creatures, this is no Proof that he knew their Natures, otherwise than as we

the Formation of Eve was a Creation *sui generis*. Adam, with all other living Creatures, was formed out of *inanimate Matter*: Eve was a living Creature taken from the Substance of another living Creature. When therefore Moses said, that God rested from ALL his Works which he had made, he might refer to the first kind of Creation only; which ought so much the rather to be allowed, because it is certain that every Work of God was not within the six Days Creation; for the *Chaos* is mentioned as subsisting antecedently to the first Day, as the Matter from which all other Things were to be created. There was a Creation therefore prior to the Work of the six Days, viz. a Production of something out of nothing; and why may it not as consistently be supposed that there was another Creation, of a Kind distinct from the other two, after the six Days were expired? I must leave this to the Reader's Judgment. My Reasoning will stand upon either Hypothesis: But if this be admitted it will be more easy to account for the Fallacy put upon Eve, who, it may be presumed, was not as yet so well instructed in the Powers of the several Creatures which she saw about her, as to know that the Serpent had not naturally the Gift of Speech, or Reason.

do, by Use and Experience; and how much of this sort of Experience he had gained before his Fall, is altogether uncertain.

The next Supposition in the Case is, that Eve knew, that, naturally, the Serpent had not the Gifts of Speech or Reason. The Question then with her must have been, How came he by them? For that he had them, she could not doubt, against the Evidence of her Senses. Thus far there is no Credulity. And if you ask, Why did she believe him? Might not the Devil improve this very Circumstance into an Argument to give Credit to his Story? The Scripture History of this Transaction is very short. We know no more than the main Substance of this Temptation, and its fatal Issue. But it is natural to suppose, that, in the Course of the whole Affair, many Things might have happened, of which the Scripture says nothing, and it is scarce to be conceived, that, when Eve heard the Serpent speak, it should not have raised her Curiosity to know the Cause of so extraordinary a Thing. Suppose this, and suppose with-

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al, that the Serpent told her, that it was owing<sup>e</sup> to the Virtues of that very Tree,

• The Authors of the *Universal History* have put this Supposition ; but very inconsistently with the other Hypothesis before mentioned (and by them also adopt- ed) viz. that *Eve* mistook the Serpent for a Seraph, or heavenly Messenger. But *Milton* hath set this forth in a beautiful Light, *Paradise Lost*, B. ix. 553, where *Eve* speaks to the Serpent thus.

*What may this mean ? Language of Man pronounc'd*

*By Tongue of Brute, and human Sense express'd !—*

*Thee, Serpent, subtil'st Beast of all the Field*

*I knew, but not with human Voice endu'd.*

*Redouble then this Miracle and say,*

*How can'st thou speakable of mute ?*

To which the Serpent answers ;

*I was at first as other Beasts that graze*

*The trodden Herb, of abject Thoughts and low,*

*As was my Food, nor ought but Food discern'd,*

*Or Sex ; and apprehended nothing high ;*

*Till on a Day roving the Field——*

And then having told of his falling upon the forbidden Tree, and eating its Fruit, he shews her the Effects ;

*Sated at length, ere long I might perceive*

*Strange Alteration in me, to Degree*

*Of Reason in my inward Pow'rs, and Speech*

*Wanted not long ; though to this Shape retain'd.*

*Thenceforth to Speculations high or deep*

*I turn'd my Thoughts ; and with capacious Mind*

*Consider'd all Things visible in Heaven,*

*Or Earth, or Middle ; all Things fair and good, &c.*

I have produced this as Authority for nothing but  
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of whose Fruit he was now tempting her to take and eat. If she could believe him in this (and why might she not?) the Strength of the Temptation must have born Proportion to her Astonishment; and the more wonderful she thought it that a Brute should be turned into a reasonable Creature, the more easily would she be persuaded, that, by the self-same Means, a human Creature might become as God. I do not lay this down for certain Fact, but the very Possibility of the Supposition may shew us, that without a more particular Account of the Circumstances of this Transaction than the Scripture has given us, we are by no means qualified to pronounce it *incredible*.

The principal Difficulties being thus removed; let those who are disposed to turn this Story into Ridicule, take the whole of it together, and consider, whether, supposing that God in his Wisdom saw it fit to bring the Virtues of our first Parents to a Trial, it be possible to conceive how it could have been done (as Matters then stood) but by to shew that the Hypothesis has Sense and Probability in it; which is all I have Occasion for.



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some such Way as the History here sets forth. The Memory of the Creation must now be supposed to have been very fresh and strong upon the Minds of the first Pair. God's visible Manifestations of himself to them were frequent, as the Scripture represents, and as it is almost necessary to be supposed, if it were only to instruct them how to live, and provide for themselves in a World where every Thing was new and strange, and where they had no Guides like themselves, as we have. Under these Circumstances, it was scarce possible that a Thought of *Idolatry* should have entered into their Minds; nor were they under any such Influences from *sensual* Appetite, as their Posterity were afterwards exposed to, when Mankind came to increase and multiply. Food for their bodily Sustenance was all they wanted; and here too there was no Danger from Intemperance, their Drink being pure elementary Water, and their Meat the Fruits of the Earth. In the first, Nature afforded no Variety; in the latter there was much. Here therefore the RESTRAINT was laid, and one particular Tree only was singled out from among the

the rest, of the Fruit of which, upon pain of Death, they were forbidden to eat.

Now then comes the Question ; Whence was the Trial of their Obedience to arise ? Or what was there to tempt them to transgress a Law supported by so severe a Sanction ? *Want* it could not be, for there was no Scarcity, since they were allowed free Liberty to eat of all the rest of the Trees in the Garden. *Wantonness* of Appetite seems to be too *weak* a Principle to work such an Effect, at least whilst Appetite was cool and regular ; not inflamed by vicious Indulgence, which in such a State of Things had no Place. But there was *one* Opening yet left. They were Lords of all that Heart could wish ; but not incapable of being wrought into Discontent at the Lot their Maker had assigned them, and Aspirings after higher Things. On this weak Side therefore the Devil attacks *Eve*. *God doth know that in the Day ye eat thereof then your Eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil*, Gen. iii. 5. Whatever the Devil *precisely* meant by this, here was plainly a Bribe offered to her Pride ; that

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she should become like God himself, or like those glorious Spirits which she had seen ministering before him. But how should he have persuaded *Eve* of this? Had he assumed no visible Form, but simply suggested this to her Thoughts, by some secret Influence upon her Mind, it would have passed without Effect. He may tempt Us to commit Sin by suggesting evil Thoughts, and exciting the Appetite to evil Things. But this is in Matters where common Experience directs us to the Means. Thus, when he suggests to us a lustful or revengeful Thought, we know that we have naturally the Power of gratifying those Appetites. But by what Experience in the World could *Eve* have been led to imagine, that the forbidden Tree had any such Virtue as the Devil pretended? She knew and had experienced that other Trees had only the Virtue of Nourishment; and God had expressly told her, that the Virtue of this Tree was Death. It would therefore have been to no purpose for the Devil to have barely suggested such a Thought as this into the Mind of *Eve* (which would have appeared to her in no other Light than as a wanton

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Sally of her Imagination, and been neglected as such) it was necessary that he should present himself in some visible Form, or by some visible Instrument, to vouch for the Virtues of this Tree, by such kind of plausible Address, as might draw her Attention and impose upon her Credulity; and if to appear as one of the heavenly Retinue was not permitted him (as, for the Reason hinted at above, we may presume, it was not) where will you find an Instrument so proper as the Serpent, who approached nearest to the Dignity of human Nature, and might perhaps, with respect to his external Form, have come much nearer than we, at present, are wont to imagine? It is a hard Matter to rid ourselves of Prejudices which by early Possession are become almost natural to us; but, taking this Account all together, so far am I from thinking it incredible; that, had it been the Intention of *Moses* not to give us a true History, but a Fiction, that should carry the Face and Appearance of Probability, he could not (in my Opinion) have thought of any Thing that would better have agreed with the original State of Things.



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From the *Temptation* then let us proceed to the *Sentence* denounced upon *Adam's* Transgression, the Penalty of which was *Death*, upon himself and all his Posterity. I have before observed that the Threatning *Thou shalt die*, did not intend that *Adam* should instantly die, but that, whereas he was created immortal, he should, in case of Transgression, thenceforth become mortal, or *subject* to Death. But the Question still is, What this *Death* means; And here Christian Writers go different Ways. Some will have it to signify no more than simply the Period of his Existence in this World; others extending the Notion of it to the Pains and Penalties of a future State. I shall not enter into this Dispute; but in this, and in all other Points where Christians differ, shall follow that Sense which appears to me most convenient. A Liberty, I presume, which I have a Right to make use of; because Infidelity can receive no real Support from Objections founded in Notions, that are not clearly and plainly delivered in Scripture. Now all that the Scripture seems clearly to say in this Case is,

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is, that *Adam* should return to his *Dust*; as you will see by comparing the original Threatning with the Sentence, as it stands *Gen. iii. 17, 19.* *Because thou hast hearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and hast eaten of the Tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it—In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread till thou return unto the Ground; for out of it wast thou taken: For Dust thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou return, Gen. iii. 17, 19.* If *Adam* had not sinned, he would not have returned to the Ground. But, after he had sinned, he is sentenced to return to the Ground. This is that which constitutes the Death of a Man, considered as compounded of Soul and Body; and as the Threatning and the Sentence must correspond to each other, this therefore must be understood as all that was intended by the Words, *thou shalt die*, unless you will say that the Sentence was *respite*d; which will come to the same Thing, as to our present Purpose. For, in either View, nothing appears about *Adam's* SOUL, whether it should at all exist after his Body was returned to Dust, or in what State it should exist.

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exist. Of this, I say, nothing at all is said. If a Redemption had not been intended, God might have destroyed him both Soul and Body; or his Soul might have been preserved to be punished in the Kingdom of that Apostate Spirit by whom he had been seduced. But as the Scripture is silent upon this Point, it will best become us to be silent too.

Let the Unbeliever now say what he has to object. By his own free Grace, God created *Adam* to Immortality. He that grants a Favour has a Right to grant it upon his own Terms. The express Stipulation with *Adam* was, that he should not eat of the Fruit of one particular Tree in the Garden. Where then (I ask) was the Fault that God should withdraw the Privilege, when the Condition upon which it was granted, was broken? Some perhaps may think that this was a very hard Condition; and that there is a very great *Disproportion* between the Sin and the Punishment. If you will call that a Punishment, which was nothing else than the Forfeiture of a Privilege; it may reason-

reasonably be demanded, What do you know of what is proportionate or disproportionate in such a Case? In human Things we think it reasonable to submit to the Wisdom of Legislators, as the proper Judges, to what Crimes what Punishments are to be annexed. And why is not the great Governor of the Universe to be treated with the same Distinction? I shall have Occasion to enter into this Point more fully in another Place. In the mean time, let such Objectors take care that they are right, in estimating the Value of this Offence, and that they do not impose upon themselves by Images, taken from common Things by no means adequate to the Matter under Consideration. *Adam's* Punishment (we admit) was nothing less than Disinheritance. The eating of the Fruit of a Tree, you will say, was a trivial Thing. And if *Adam* had done any thing else of which you can suppose him to have been capable, would not the Objection have been just as good? Offences are great or small only by Comparison with others; and what *other* Offence can you think of, which in comparison to this you would call *great*? Besides, we are  
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to remember that Actions are to be estimated not barely by the Matter of them, but by the Mind and Spirit with which they are done. If a Son offends his Father in a trivial Matter, who behaves dutifully in Things of greater Importance, it will be excused. But if you suppose a Case so circumstanced that the Son's Disobedience will infer (not simply a Neglect, but) a *Contempt* of the Parent's Authority; be the Matter of the Offence what it will, it will deserve the severest Resentment. What the Son thinks to be a trivial Thing, and in common Estimation passes as such, he may presume the Father will think so too, without Warning to the contrary. But if the Father should say, "Son, I expect your Obedience in this Point, or I will treat you as a Rebel," and the Son should presumptuously offend, would you think it excusable? Apply this to the present Case, and consider it in Conjunction with its Circumstances. The Motive to eat in *Eve*, we see, was presumptuous; favouring of the Spirit of the Angels that fell; a Desire to advance herself above the Rank to which God had created her, and to become like

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unto him. What was the Motive with Adam, the Scripture (expressly) says not. He had no Communication with the Serpent, but was seduced by his Wife, as he pleads in his Defence, *Gen. iii. 12. The Woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* But as Eve was herself first prevailed upon to eat by what the Devil told her, it is most natural to be supposed, that with the same Bait she tempted her Husband; and that both were led away with the vain Hope of *being like Gods*, which seems to be implied in that severe Irony, *ver. 22, which is pointed at both, Behold the Man is become AS ONE OF US.* However this be, it is certain that neither of them paid that Regard to the divine Precept that they ought to have paid, and that they were Sinners against a Law upon which God had laid the whole Weight of his Authority. Can any Thing be more solemn than these Words, *Of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thou shalt not eat, for in the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die, Gen. ii. 17.* This was the single Restraint he had put them under by any express

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press Prohibition, and the single Instance by which (as Matters then stood) they were capable of giving Proof of their Duty and Allegiance; and therefore a Failure in this Point was a Failure in every Thing; an open Revolt from the God of Heaven, to trust in a Creature inferior to themselves. But why (you will ask) did God lay this Restraint upon them, which he foresaw would prove a Snare to them? And you may ask if you please, why does God lay Restraints upon Us, foreseeing that they will prove a Snare? All I can say to this Matter is, that if it was suitable to the Wisdom and Goodness of God to appoint our Way to Happiness and Glory through Temptations, it might have been as suitable to both, to take the same Method with our first Parents; and, when Nature as yet was too young to furnish them with proper Matter of Trial, to give them a positive Law for that Purpose, and permit the Devil to do, what Lust and Appetite at that Time could not. We know not what it was fit for God to do in either Case, otherwise than from the Experience of what he hath done; and it is notorious, that the Method

thod is equally either right or wrong in both. This Objection therefore concerns not Revelation specially, but lies with equal Strength against Natural Religion; for all Religion stands upon the Principles of human Liberty, and human Imperfection, and that Sort of Providence which exposes us to Trials and Temptations, which are the Exercise of Virtue, and through which we are to make our Way to our final Reward.

Let us then pass on to the grand Objection of all, Why did the Sentence pass upon ALL Men? Why was the whole human Race involved in the Punishment, who had no Share in the Sin? Some Divines hold, that *Adam* stood as the *Representative* of his whole Race; and that *his* Act was *their* Act; *his* Sin *their* Sin. Whatever there is of Truth or Soundness in this Notion (in which Christian Writers are not agreed) all I shall say to it at present is, that I have no Occasion for it. It will be remembered, that I consider *Death* in this Argument as meaning no more than the Period of this earthly Existence. In this  
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Sense *Adam* became mortal by his Transgression, and in the same Sense, and by the same Transgression his Posterity became so. And where is the Hardship of this? Suppose that instead of being made *subject* to Death, *Adam* had been doom'd to *instant* Death. Could the Sentence have been justified? No doubt it might. For if *Adam* had no Claim to Life but what stood upon his Obedience, the Condition ceasing, the Claim must have fallen of course; and where there is no Claim there can be no Wrong. But if *Adam* had *instantly* been destroyed, the human Race could never have been; for the whole human Race was in his Loins. God might have created a new Head, it is true; but he would not have been in Justice bound to do it; for he was not in Justice bound to create *Adam*. If then God would have been justified in preventing the Existence of the human Race by destroying its Head, undoubtedly he is justified in having done a less Thing: And it is certainly a less Thing to shorten the Period of the human Existence, than not to suffer Mankind to be at all. The Embarrassment in this Question arises from

not distinguishing two the most distinct Things in the World, *Right*, and *Favour*. That one Man should be deprived of his *Right* for another's Act, is unjust; as if a Magistrate should hang up the Son for the Father's Treason: For every Subject has a Right to Protection: till he hath forfeited it by Mal-conduct. But, that one Man should, by another's Act, stand precluded from some *real Good* (supposed to be a Matter of mere *Grace* and *Favour* in the Person by whom he stands precluded) is not unjust. We see Instances of it every Day in human Administrations, and in the ordinary Exercise of God's Providence, who hath so linked together the Interests of Men, that one Man can scarce do a wicked or a foolish Thing, but some other (innocent) Person will be the worse for it. If a Lord grants an Estate to a Man and his Heirs, on Condition of certain Services to be performed; a Failure in such Services will forfeit the Estate, not only to the Person himself, but to his Posterity. The Reason is, because the Children claiming only under the Father, and the Estate having reverted to

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the Lord by the Father's Act, it is the same Thing as if no such Grant had ever been made. So again; if a Man is guilty of Treason against the State, and the Law cuts him off; it may be to the great Loss and Prejudice of his Family, who had no Share with him in the Offence. Whom will you blame in such Cases? A Lord does no Wrong in seizing an Estate when the Condition upon which he granted it, is not performed; and the Magistrate does his Duty in executing the Traytor who would subvert the Government. If there is any Offence in this, that the Innocent suffer with the Guilty; it must fall upon God, by whose Providence the Order of Things is so established, that otherwise it cannot be. And so it is in Multitudes of other Cases. When a Father disinherits an undutiful Son; his Posterity will suffer. When a Man spends his Estate in Luxury and Debauchery; his Children, his Friends, his Dependants, may all of them be Sufferers. This is the Result of the natural Order of Things, as established by God; and therefore must be considered as the Act of God. You see then how far the Objection

*Of the Fall and its Consequences.* It reaches. It affects not only God's special Providence in this Case, but his universal Providence. And how do we justify God's universal Providence in this respect? Why thus—That "He is absolute Master of his own Gifts; liable to no Prescription in the Disposal of them, but what arises from his own Wisdom." When a Child suffers by his Father's Vices, he is put into that State of Being in which Providence had a Right to have placed him, whether his Father had sinned, or not. And so it is in all the other Instances. Now if this Answer will justify God in respect of his universal Providence; it will as well justify him in that particular Instance of his Providence now under our Consideration: For try if you can find any Ground whereupon to build a Claim of Immortality, on the Behalf of *Adam* or his Posterity, excepting only the free Grace and Favour of God; who might have made them all mortal from the very first, if he had so pleased. But if this Answer will not clear God's universal Providence, and you cannot think of a better; there is an End of Providence, and the Dispute will come to a



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Point to which my present Undertaking does not lead me to pursue it.

As to the MERCY of God (that glorious Perfection of his Nature, by which he most delights to be known to his Creatures) THAT must be sought for in the Work of our REDEMPTION, to which I now willingly hasten. The general Idea of the REDEMPTION (as above laid down) is this, That *Christ* came to repair the Loss sustained by *Adam's* Fall, and to put away that Wrath and Condemnation that is due to all the personal Sins and Transgressions of Men. The Mercy of God did not make void his Justice, nor alter the Word that had once gone out of his Lips, *In the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* The Sentence of Mortality stood, and as yet stands, unreversed; and (with some few Exceptions, to be accounted for in due Season) from the Beginning of the Creation all Men have died, and will die; to be a standing Monument of God's Displeasure against Sin, so long as the Generations of Men shall last. But it is foretold, that a Time shall come when this State of  
Being

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Being shall have an End ; when *Christ*, who came to save us, shall come again to judge us ; and when Death shall be destroyed by the Resurrection from the Dead.

*Christ* himself told his Disciples, that he would come again to them, *John* xiv. 28.

And when he cometh, he will come in *Glory with his holy Angels*, in order to Judgment, *Matt.* xvi. 27. And then will there be a

great and amazing Change in the Face of Things ; for *the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat ; the Earth also,*

*and all the Works that are therein shall be burnt up,* 2 *Pet.* iii. 10. Then shall appear the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, and the Dead shall hear his Voice, and they that hear shall live, *Matt.* xxiv. 30.

*John* v. 25. And it is to be observed, that this Privilege of Immortality belongs to all the Sons of *Adam*, who have accepted or shall accept the heavenly Call, by Faith and true Repentance ; for the Scripture mentions all holy Men of old as *Heirs of the Promises*, as the Sons of God, and *Children of the Resurrection.*

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We see then fallen Man, by the Grace of God, a Candidate for Immortality. But here a Question arises, What becomes of Man during this long Reign of Death? What is he in the intermediate Space between Death and the Resurrection? Is he nothing? This is a very material Point; and let the Scripture speak to it.

When God created *Adam*, it is said, that he formed him of the Dust of the Ground, and breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life, and Man became a living Soul, Gen. ii. 7. Had God formed an organical Body only, and not breathed into it the Breath of Life, it would not have been a Man, any more than an Image of Wax or Clay is a Man. The Notion of a Man therefore is, properly speaking, the Notion of a Being, compounded of an organized Body, and a vital Principle; and consequently when these two Principles are severed, the Man (properly speaking) is no more. Such a Separation there is in Death, which is the Destruction,

Deſtruction, or Diſſolution of the organized Body.

But though, in this ſtrict philoſophical Senſe, the Man ceases when the Body dies, or is diſſolved; yet, if you will ſuppoſe that after this Diſſolution the vital Principle remains, you cannot ſay that he is *nothing*; for a Part of him remaineth, and, let me add, that Part of him which, being the Source of Life, is alſo the Source of Reaſon and Action, and conſtitutes his whole moral Nature. The Scripture repreſents the forming the organized Body, and the making Man a *living Soul*, as two diſtinct Actions. *God formed Man* (that is, the organized Body) *of the Duſt of the Ground, and breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life, and Man became* (that is, by, or in Virtue of this *Breathing* he became) *a living Soul*. The organized Body therefore, as ſuch, had no Life, but received it by the breathing in this vital Principle; which therefore is the Principle that reaſons, wills, and acts. It is *Life* (as it is in Man) that gives theſe Powers; and therefore that Prin-



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ciple which in him constitutes Life, must be the Principle of these Operations.

Now I say, if you will suppose that, after the Body is dissolved, this vital Principle still remains; you may, with very little Variation from Propriety of Speech, say, that the Man lives even when he is dead; meaning, not the compounded Being called Man, but that vital Principle by which he had the Knowledge and Understanding of a Man; and was capable of obeying and sinning against God. If you were to suppose this vital Principle to be destroyed, and the organized Body to remain; you would with less Propriety call that the Man: And yet we call it so every Day, and the Scripture calls it so in this very Place. *God formed MAN of the Dust of the Ground, and breathed into his Nostrils, &c. and MAN became a living Soul;* where it is plain that by *Man* is meant the organized Body; for this, and this only, it was, that was *formed of the Dust of the Ground*. But when we speak of Man as a moral Agent, we constantly mean the Mind<sup>e</sup>, and

<sup>e</sup>Neque NOS, CORPORA sumus; neque ego TIBI  
not

not the Body. For it is the Mind, alone that acts, and which constitutes (as I said before) the whole moral Nature.

Let us take this then *ex hypothesi*, That the Soul survives the Body; and we shall come up to the full Sense of Scripture. The Notion of a Redemption plainly supposes it. For who are to be redeemed? Why, the Race that sinned. But Millions of them are dead, and all will die; and if the Soul dies with the Body, the whole Race will be extinct, and there will be none to be redeemed. God might form new Bodies from the Dust, and again breathe into them the *Breath of Life*. But these would be *new Men*, and not the *old Race* that sinned. But it yields a clear, consistent Account of this Matter, if we say, that the Souls of the Dead remain in the Hand of God, waiting for the Resurrection, when the Time appointed by his Providence shall come. This is the Christian

*hæc dicens, CORPORI tuo dico. — Nam Corpus quidem quasi vas est, aut aliquod animi receptaculum. Ab ANIMO tuo quicquid agitur, id agitur a TE. Cic. Tusculan. i. 22.*

Doctrine;

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Doctrine ; which has been so universally received, and is of such high Antiquity, that it seems to me impossible to give any Account of its Rise, otherwise than by saying, either that it carries with it a kind of Self-evidence to the Mind (as moral Truths do) or that it was a Part of some original Revelation given to Mankind. In the Old Testament we meet with nothing express concerning it, till after *Moses*. But *Solomon* plainly says, *The Dust shall return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit shall return to God who gave it*, Eccles. xii. 7. And the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* (who may be admitted as an Evidence of the Faith of the Jewish Church at that Time) says, *The Souls of the Righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no Torment touch them. In the Sight of the Unwise they seemed to die—but they are in peace—and their Hope is full of IMMORTALITY*, Chap. iii. 1—4. It is in reference to this Notion (I conceive) that those Passages in the most early Times will be best interpreted where Death is described by the Expressions of *giving up the Ghost*, and being *gathered unto their FATHERS*<sup>f</sup>;

<sup>f</sup> See *Exam. of Warburton*.

and

and (according to our Saviour's Observation) that when God appeared to *Moses*, he spake of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, though *dead*, as yet *living*, Luke xx. 37, 38. But that which sufficeth for my present Purpose is, that our Saviour himself is clear and expresse in this Doctrine: *All live unto him*, that is, unto *God*, with whom the Spirits of just Men live, though their Bodies be dissolved. Again; *Fear not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul*, Matt. x. 28. This is saying in so many Words, that when the Body is dead, the Soul yet lives; and whither it goes, he very plainly shews in his Answer to the penitent Thief upon the Cross, *To Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. In which (for the main Substance of it) he justifies the Notion of the *Jews*, who believed that the Souls of good Men, as soon as they were separated from the Body, went into *Paradise*, into *Abraham's Bosom*, as it was called, as you see in the Parable of the *rich Man* and *Lazarus*, Luke xvi. This was going to *God*; for it was going to the Place of Happiness which God had prepared for them.



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them. And therefore the first Martyr, St. Stephen, when the Jews were stoning him, called upon God, and said, *Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit*, Acts vii. 59. Which was copying the Example of Christ himself, who, when he was upon the Cross, cried with a loud Voice, and said, *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*, Luke xxiii.

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So clear is the Scripture in this Point; which I have thus briefly touched (for more a great deal might be said) to guard against a weak Notion of some Christians, That when the Body dies, the Soul passes into a State of Sleep, or Insensibility, till the Resurrection. And now that the Doctrine is thus stated, we are to consider how it stands in the View of Reason.

And, in the first Place, I do not take upon me to say, that the Immortality of the Soul hath the Evidence of moral Truths. The many Disputes that have been raised upon this Question, by thinking Men in all Ages, shew the contrary. Nor do I pretend that, separate from all Notices by Revelation,

Revelation, this Doctrine can be established to the Degree of Demonstration, upon natural Principles. But what I say is (and it is enough for me to say) that no such *Exception* lies against this Doctrine from the Principles of Reason, but that, supposing it proposed to us as a Matter of Revelation, it may and ought to be admitted as credible: And I may go yet further in this Point, and say, that so far is it from being incredible, that the Soul should survive the Body, and be happy or miserable in a separate State, that all our natural Presumptions run strongly in favour of this Doctrine; and if this can be made appear, it will shew a beautiful affecting Harmony between Reason and Revelation, each lending a helping Hand to strengthen and support the other, and both conspiring together to enforce upon us that Sort of Conduct which is worthy of ourselves.

I have before observed, that the Act of God in forming the organized Body of the first Man, and that of his making him to be a living Soul, are represented in Scripture as two distinct Acts. And the different

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ent Language in which each of them is spoken of, seems to suggest to us, that these two Principles, the Body and the Soul, are of very distinct Natures. Of the first it is said, that God *formed Man of the Dust of the Ground*; of the latter that he *breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life*. The like Distinction is preserved in the Book of *Jab*, Chap. xxxiii. ver. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me Life*. The Soul then is the *Breath of the Almighty*: *Divinae particula Auræ*, as the Ancients called it, in Words borrowed (perhaps) from the Old Testament; which Notion some of them seem to have carried so far as to suppose that it is strictly and properly a Part of the divine Nature. This, no doubt, is very unphilosophical and absurd. But it may easily be understood, that the Soul is a Substance so nearly allied to the divine Nature, beyond what we can conceive of material Substance, as to be not unfitly represented to our Understanding, as if it were a Part of it; and this Idea the Expression of God's *breathing* into Man the vital Principle very aptly conveys: For he that  
breathes

breathes upon another, communicates to him something from himself. The Expression is metaphorical, as the Act of *Christ* was symbolical, when, imparting his Spirit to his Apostles, he BREATHED on them and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, John xx. 22. It is observable, that though all Animals have in them *the Breath of Life*, yet of Man alone it is said, that God breathed into him; and if to this you add, that he is expressly said to be made *in the Image* of God, and *after his Likeness*, you will hardly help supposing, that there is in Man some Principle superior, both to sluggish Matter, and to the vital Principle in Brutes. I do not advance this as Evidence (which at present is not my Province) but only to explain what I take to be the Scripture Sense of this Matter: And I now go on to shew, that whether the Scripture says or says not, that the Soul is an immaterial Substance, it is very reasonable to suppose it to be so. We can no otherwise judge of the Nature of the Soul, than by its Powers and Faculties, which are, *thinking, reasoning, willing, acting*; and these in the very Idea of them are clearly distinct from the



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the Idea of Matter, and of all its known Properties. Take a Grain of Sand, and consider what you will find in it. It is extended and takes up Room—it may be divided, and crumbled to Pieces—it moves not itself, but may be moved from Place to Place, and mingled and compounded with other Bodies. More than this of it you cannot conceive. And yet neither Extension, nor Division, nor Motion, nor Composition, are THOUGHT, or any thing like it. What is true of one Grain of Sand, is as true of all the Matter in the Universe put together. Nothing can result from it but Division and Motion, and this by a Force acting *ab extra*. But move or divide as you please, you will not be able to produce one single Act of Judgment or Will.

If we will carefully distinguish Life, as it subsists in Man, into its several Parts, we shall easily perceive, where the Powers of Matter end, and where the *probable* (for I go no farther at present) Necessity of calling in the Aid of an immaterial Principle begins. There is then, in the first Place  
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(for I begin with the lowest in Dignity) the *vegetative* Life, by which the Body grows and is nourished. This we have in common with the Plants and Trees. There is in the next place the *animal* Life, by which we hear, and see, and feel, and taste, and smell, and act, and move from Place to Place. This we have in common with all other Creatures called Animals. And there is, in the last place, the *rational* Life, by which we reason, and deliberate, and debate, and conclude, and resolve; and this we have (in a Degree at least) peculiar to ourselves.

Now as to the first, the *vegetative* Life, we easily apprehend how that may be begun and carried on, by Matter variously divided and compounded, and moved by an external Force. For take this Species of Life as it is in Plants, and what is it? Why, the Plant is formed by the Hand of the Almighty Creator, with various Organs to receive the Substance of its Nourishment from the Earth; which being driven up by the Heat of the Sun, or other Fire (if any other Fire there be) dispersed throughout the whole material System, fills

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up the several Pipes or Channels prepared for its Reception, and extends them into Buds, and Leaves, and Branches, and Fruit. There is nothing more than this in the *vegetative* Life, as it subsists in Man. Our Food is taken in at the Mouth, and Stomach, where it is divided and digested, to be conveyed into the Arteries and Veins, for the Supply of Blood, and other Juices necessary for Life. All this is done by an *external* Force, external (I mean) in respect of those Substances by which we grow and are nourished. The Hands give the external Force by which the Mouth is fed. The Stomach gives the external Force, by which the Food is digested, and made fit for Nourishment. And the Heart gives the external Force, by which it is driven into the several Pipes and Channels of the Body. But as in all this there is nothing of *Self-motion*, so neither is there any Thing that has any Affinity with the Ideas of Sense, or Perception, or Understanding, or Will, any more than there would be, if you should force Water through a Syringe, or strain any Thing through a Sieve; or than there is in the growing of a Plant, or of a Tree.

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There is nothing then in the mere *vegetative* Life, from whence to derive the *animal* and the *rational* Powers. And yet it should seem, that the vegetative Life comprehends the whole of what is to be done by Matter. For conceive to yourself some distinct Principle (and such a Principle there must needs be ; because, as I have said, these Powers cannot result from the compounded Motions of the Blood and other Juices ; suppose, I say, that there is some distinct Principle or Subject) in which the *animal* and the *rational* Powers have their proper Residence ; still, if you suppose that Principle to be Matter, you are advanced not one Step forwarder ; for conceive Matter in any shape, and you will never find in it the Idea of Self-motion, or Thought. But if you suppose that Principle to be *immaterial*, such a Principle may have in itself those and all other Powers, that constitute the *animal* and the *rational* Life ; and if it be so united to the Body as to communicate Impressions to it, and to receive Impressions back again from it, by the Intervention of the organical Parts ; it will ac-



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count for every Effect we see in the *animal* and the *rational* World. If you find any Difficulty in comprehending how a Principle distinct in Nature from Matter, can be so united to Matter; I answer, that it is so difficult as to be impossible. But this doth not hinder but that the Thing may be, which it is at least as easy to conceive, as it is to conceive that Matter may think. If God is not Matter (as every one who is not an Atheist, must be supposed to believe) we have then Evidence from Fact, that there is *ONE* immaterial Substance, that has in himself every Power that is in Man, in infinite Perfection; and if we, and all the material Creation are his Workmanship, we have also Evidence, that an immaterial Substance may and does communicate Impressions to Matter. But we have no Proof from one single Instance in the World, that Matter has either Thought or Self-motion. All our Experience and Observation lies the other Way.

In consequence of this Reasoning, I think it must be admitted as credible, that the Soul of Man is a Principle in Nature distinct

distinct from the Body, Having in itself the Powers of Self-motion, Understanding, Will, &c. and the Consequence will then be this, that the Dissolution of the one doth not infer the Destruction of the other. That when the Body dies the Soul may yet live, a thinking, rational Being, and naturally will do so, for any Thing that the mere Dissolution of the Body can effect to the contrary. There is nothing in Observation and Experience to contradict this Notion, but what arises from Prejudice and Want of Attention. When our Friend or our Neighbour is dead, we see nothing but a cold Lump of Clay, and thence it seems to us, as if there were a full End of him. But if the Soul is a Spirit not to be seen, or heard, or handled; sensible Conviction of its Existence (supposing it yet to exist) is a Degree of Evidence not to be had. We know not that we ourselves have Souls, otherwise than by our own Conscioufness. Nor can we tell that another Man has a Soul, but because we discern in him the proper Acts of a Spiritual Substance. How then should our Senses inform us, that the Soul lives when the Body

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is dead? We see the dead Body, and that is all we can see. But where the Soul goes, our Reason, or the Word of God, alone can shew us; and if, as the Scripture says, it goes to God, it is, from the very Moment of its Separation, become the Inhabitant of a new World, and hath no more visible Communication with this, than a Man removed into, and settled in, a foreign Country hath with the Place of his Nativity.

But this is trivial. The strongest Prejudices (which no doubt have great Weight with many) arise from hence, that we know nothing of the Powers and Operations of the Soul, but from what appears of them in this State of Union with the Body; and because we find that they are more vigorous, or more languid, or (sometimes) quite suspended, according as the bodily Faculties are disposed; we are apt to conclude that these Operations so much depend upon the Body, that they will cease when the Body dies. An Infant has not the Reason and Understanding of a Man; but as the Body grows in Strength  
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and Stature, the Faculties of the Mind improve with it. And when by Ripeness of Age these Faculties are come to full Maturity, they may be impaired, or lost again, by Diseases of various Kinds. But it is very easy to conceive (if we will attend) that though the Soul has these Faculties in itself, and independent of the Body, yet so long as it is in a State of Union with the Body, the Use and Exercise of them may depend upon the Disposition of the corporeal Instrument: And this is all that we do or can experience, that when the Body is so or so indisposed, the Exercise of these Faculties ceases, or is impaired, not that the Powers themselves are destroyed. If you tye me fast Hand and Foot, so that I cannot stir, the Exercise of my locomotive Faculty is stopped; but the Faculty itself remains, as you will soon be convinced, if you untie the Cord and let me loose. If a Man falls into a deep Sleep, or is seized with an Apoplexy; Sense and Motion is lost; but when he awakes, or the Distemper is removed, he has all his Faculties entire as he had before. You will not say in this Case that the Soul retires a while from



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the Body, and then returns again; but that the Soul, still in the Body, recovers the Use of its Faculties.

These (and numberless other) Instances shew, that whilst the Exercise of the Faculties of the Soul is lost, the Powers themselves may and do remain. Well; but suppose, that, instead of awaking or recovering from his Apoplexy, the Man dies; how will the Case stand then? When a Man recovers from an Apoplexy, or awakes from Sleep, the Soul finds its proper Instrument, and therefore recovers the Use of its Faculties; but when he dies the Instrument is removed:—And what follows? Will you say, that therefore the Exercise of its Faculties is at a full End? This were to say (what no Mortal can prove) that because, during its State of Union with the Body, the Soul cannot act without the Intervention of the corporeal Instrument, therefore neither can it act without it in a State of separate Existence. If it be possible to conceive, that God might have created a Soul endued with Faculties, or Powers not capable of being drawn forth into Action, but in Virtue, or by the Aid, of its Union,

Union with the Body; it is much more natural to think, that as the Soul has Powers, or Faculties, proper to its own distinct Nature, so it hath Ways of using, or exercising them proper to its own distinct Nature. There are some kinds of Perceptions which have a peculiar Relation to the *animal* Life, such as Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, Tasting, and Smelling; and whether the Soul is capable of having exactly the same Sensations otherwise than by the bodily Organs, may be made a Question; though, I think, it is no very difficult one. But Thought, and Reason, and Will, have no special Relation to this State of Existence; and as in the Use of these Faculties, we want not the Interposition of any external Medium, but only (it may be) such a Disposition of the Brain as will not obstruct their Operations; we may very reasonably suppose, that when all Relation to the Body shall cease, and the Soul comes to exist separately, and independently by itself, these Operations will be so far from ceasing, that they will be the more free and unconfined<sup>s</sup>.

<sup>s</sup> Facile intelligi potest, animum et videre, et audire, non eas partes quæ quasi fenestræ sunt animi—

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You may take your Notion of this, if you please, from the different States of the animal Body, as it subsists in the Womb, and out of it. Whilst we are in the Womb our Senses are locked up, and we are sustained only by Communication from the Mother. But when we are born into the World, our Senses immediately begin to open, and we are fed and nourished by proper Instruments of our own. The Death of the Body may be the Birth of the Soul, to its proper, natural Life, the Rudiments of which it received in the Body, as the Body itself received the Beginnings of the animal Life, by its Formation in the Womb. And as the Body when born hath a different kind of Life, from that which it had in the Womb; so may the Soul, when its earthly Inclosure shall be dissolved.

Atque ea profecto [omnia quæ ad animum referuntur] tum multo puriora, et dilucidiora cernentur, cum, quò natura fert, liber animus pervenerit. Nam nunc quidem—foramina illa, quæ patent ad animum a corpore—terrenis concretisque corporibus sunt intercepta quodammodo. Cum autem nihil erit præter animum, nulla res objecta impediet, quo minus percipiat quale quidque sit. *Cicer. Tusculan. i. 20.*

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It may have new Ways of Thinking, new Ways of perceiving; and if it has not the same Sensations of Pleasure and Pain that it has in this Life, it may have others suited to its State of separate Existence; and there may be as much Difference in point of Excellency between one Life and the other, as there is between the Life of an *Embryo*, and that of a perfect, grown, Man.

You take notice, no doubt, that all along in this Argument I have proceeded, as if the Soul, after its Separation from the Body, would remain a pure Spirit, absolutely stript of all Matter. But it should just be observed, that many of the old Philosophers, and some of the ancient Fathers of the Christian Church, have maintained, that besides the gross, organical Body, the Soul has another, thin, etherial, Body, by which the Intercourse with the organical Body is carried on during its State of Union with it; and that this thin, etherial Body is not dissolved, when the gross, organical Body is dissolved, but passes together with the Soul into a separate State, as its proper *Vehicle*, by the Help of which it is capable  
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of receiving all the Sensations of Pleasure and Pain, which it had whilst united to the Body. I see nothing impossible, or unphilosophical in this Notion; but I have no need of it; and as it does not appear <sup>5</sup> suf-

\* *Origen* (whom the learned *Dr. Cudworth* \* inclines to follow) thought he saw this Notion in that Passage of *St. Paul*, 2 *Cor.* v. 1. *We know that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle* [*ἡ ἐκτὸς οἰκία τῆς σκηνῆς*] *shall be dissolved, &c.* where he will have the *οἰκία* [the *House*] to signify the gross *Body*; and the *σκηνή* [the *Tabernacle*] to mean that thin, airy *Vehicle*, which he supposes to be the inward *Integument* of the *Soul*. But I see no Ground for this Interpretation. It is an odd Description of the animal *Body*, to call it the *House* of the *σκηνή*. It is as if you should call a *Man's House* the *House* of his *Shirt*, or the *House* of his *Coat*. Besides, this Interpretation ill agrees with what follows, ver. 4. *We that are* [*ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ*] *in the Tabernacle, do groan, being burdened &c.* An Expression which well describes the State of the *Living* whilst the *Soul* is cloathed in this earthly *Body*; not of the *Dead*, when it is uncloathed and covered only with the airy *Vehicle*. And yet, according to this Notion, the *Dead* as well as the *Living* are *ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ*. It remains then that we understand the *σκηνή* (as our Translators understood it) to signify the gross, earthly *Body*, which *St. Peter* calls *σκήνωμα*, a Word of the same Import, and which is also *Tabernacle* in our Trans-

\* *Intellect. Syst.* p. 819. 4<sup>to</sup> Edit.

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ficiently founded in Scripture, I shall enter no farther into the Consideration of it, but go on to something which, I foresee, may be urged in the way of Objection to the foregoing Argument, *viz.* That it reaches to Brutes and other Animals, as well as to Men. For these have in them *the Breath of Life*<sup>1</sup>; these have Self-motion, Sense, and Will; and, in a certain Degree, Reason too: And if these are not the Properties of mere Matter, but suppose an immaterial Principle, it will follow, that they too have immaterial Souls. I admit the Conclusion. Brutes, &c. have immaterial Souls as well as Men, and for the same Reasons. But if you would go on, and charge it as an Inconvenience upon this Doctrine, that therefore the Souls of Brutes are immortal too, this Conclusion will not follow. For I do not argue, that because the Souls of Men are immaterial, therefore (absolutely) they are immortal; but that

lation, 2 *Pet.* i. 13. *Our earthly House of the Tabernacle*; is the same Thing as if it had been said, *Our earthly House WHICH is a Tabernacle*; or, *the earthly Tabernacle in which WE DWELL.*

<sup>1</sup> *Gen.* vii. 15. & *alibi.*

because

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because they are immaterial, therefore they *may be* immortal ; or, at most, that, naturally, or without some Act of God intervening, besides the mere Dissolution of the Body, they are so. But the Certainty, in Point of Fact, that the Souls of Men are immortal, I lay upon the Scripture Evidence ; and to make Way for this Evidence, I have undertaken to shew (and, I hope, I have fully proved) that the Doctrine is, in the Nature of it, credible ; and if you will accept of the same Conclusion in respect of the Souls of Brutes, you are welcome to it. Their Souls, as well as the Souls of Men, may live in a separate State, for any thing that the mere Dissolution of their Bodies will infer to the contrary ; and had the Scriptures declared that they would, there would have been the same Reason for our Belief in respect of the one as in respect of the other. But as the Scriptures say nothing of the Souls of Brutes, whether they are or are not immortal ; I determine nothing positive on either Side of the Question. They may live in a separate State, either in other Bodies, or out of Bodies ; or they may be destroyed when these Bodies

dies

dies die, as having served the full End of their Creation. For though the mere Dissolution of the Bodies in which they reside will not destroy them; God may destroy them by an Act of his Power, who, as he hath formed animal Bodies to last but for a determinate Space of Time, may in like manner determine the Existence of the Souls by which those Bodies are animated, to the same Period, if it seemeth good to his infinite Wisdom.

We have pursued the Argument so far as to have shewn it credible, that this present State is not the last State of Man, but that there may be a State after this, in which we shall live (at least in *Soul*) to be either happy or otherwise. We may now advance to the next Step, which is to shew, that there is something in Nature and Reason which prepares us to expect such a State. We may, in the first place, form no light Presumption from the Insufficiency of this World to complete the human Happiness. It seems reasonable to think, that God hath suited the State of every Species of Beings to the Nature which he hath imparted



parted to them; and, for ought we can tell, he hath done so in respect of all the Creatures below us. All inanimate Bodies are furnished with Powers suited to the Effects they are intended to produce, in the Works of Providence. All the various Tribes of Animals have Faculties and Propensities that correspond to the present State of their Existence; which, so far as we are able to judge, fills up the whole Measure of their Desires. Give a Horse his Ease and his Provender, and he thinks of nothing farther. He knows no Want if he feels no Pain. But Man launches out into Futurity; is ever driving forward to extend his Enjoyments; and never comes at that Period where he can say, that there is (absolutely) nothing left for him to wish; nothing beyond his present Acquisitions, which if he had, he would be still better pleased. Happiness is what we all covet, and it ever seems to us incomplete, and, our Desires and Cravings only considered, it really is, and must be so. But it should seem, that if God had intended us only for this World, he would not have implanted

in us those Propensities which the World itself is not able to satisfy.

But the strongest Argument arises from God's moral Government, as it concerns the Distribution of Good and Evil. We have before said, that God, as sovereign Lord of the Universe, was originally at Liberty to assign to Man any Degree or Duration of Happiness that he thought fit. But it is nevertheless true, that when he had determined him to a State of Being, in which his very Nature made him accountable to his Creator; he at the same time made himself, in some sort, accountable to his Creatures, who, if they owe him Homage, have an equitable Right to expect that their Happiness shall bear Proportion to the Value of their Obedience, as their State may be considered comparatively with respect to the State of other Beings of the same Rank and Order. But this is not seen in this World. Good Men are not always better provided for than bad ones, but many times a great deal worse; at least it *appears* to us so to be. But it may reasonably be expected, that God will at some

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Time

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Time or other justify himself to all reasonable Creatures, by making it plain and visible, that Happiness follows Virtue as its proper Reward ; and this will then, and can then only appear, if when this mortal Life shall have an End, in which *all Things happen alike to all*, another State of Being shall take place, in which Virtue shall be so much the more eminently rewarded, as it has been left undistinguished in this.

As to the Punishment of bad Men, I purposely reserve what I have to say to it, to another Place, where the Subject will be more properly handled. But the Argument, as thus stated, leads directly to a future State for good ones ; the Thing that the Doctrine of the Redemption (which I am now explaining) singly points at : For Redemption is Redemption to immortal *Happiness*. But let it be observed, that this Argument will not go so far as to ascertain to us IMMORTALITY. The Retribution of a future State may be an eternal Retribution ; but the mere Notion of a Retribution does not involve in it the Notion of Eternity ;

Eternity ; because a temporary Retribution may serve to justify God's Providence, for any thing that we can tell to the contrary. One Stage of Being after this, of like, or even less Duration, would perhaps set all Inequalities right. It is very true that we can see no Cause why God should destroy good Men, when he has once taken them to their Reward, and perhaps probable Reasons might be thought of to shew, that he will not ; but, I think, that Certainty in this Case must stand upon some higher Principle.—But let me add one Observation more, which is, that neither does this Argument determine, whether good Men shall have their Reward in the Body or out of the Body ; because a Retribution may be understood equally, upon either Supposition. If it were supposed that the Soul, after its Separation from the Body, exists in a State of Inactivity, or Insensibility, till the Resurrection unites it again to the Body, then to receive its Reward ; or if you suppose that it immediately enters upon its Reward, in a State of separate Existence, never to be again united to the Body ; the Difficulties upon Providence



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that arise from the unequal Distribution of  
Good and Evil in this Life, will be equally  
answered. But *Christ* hath joined both  
Ways together, and put good Men in Pos-  
session of their Reward, immediately after  
Death, in a State of separate Existence,  
fully to be completed afterwards, when  
the End of all Things shall come, and the  
Body shall be raised from its Dust to im-  
mortal Life.

It may be suggested perhaps, that the  
Doctrines of a separate State, and of the  
Resurrection of the Body, stand not well  
together; for that the one takes away all  
Use or Necessity of the other: And if you  
consider the next World, simply under the  
Notion of a State of Retribution, in respect  
of the Good or Evil done or suffered in  
this Life, so indeed it will appear. But  
you are to remember, that the precise End  
or Purpose of the Resurrection, is to restore  
that original State to which *Adam* was  
created; which is not effected by the State  
of separate Existence. For to exist in Soul  
only, is not the same Thing as to exist in  
Soul and Body together. The one is the  
State

State of a Man ; the other the State of a pure and simple Spirit. If you should go on and ask, Why it was necessary that Man should be restored to his original State of Soul and Body ; or, Why a State of separate Existence, extended through all Eternity, would not have done as well? This is a Question that I cannot answer, nor am I concerned to answer it. I may as reasonably ask you, Why God created us Men, and not Spirits ? and if I should, you will as little be able to answer me. But as every one, who thinks worthily of the supreme Being, will say in this Case, that he best knows how to order the Workmanship of his own Hands ; I may, I hope, be admitted to the Benefit of the same Plea, and be justified in presuming, that as there was Wisdom (founded upon Reasons respecting God's universal Government) in assigning to Man that State of Being at first ; there is likewise the same Wisdom in restoring it, when it had been lost by Transgression. Lay this down, and consider withal, that Death was to have a Time for his Dominion, and that all Mankind were to pass their Probation before the Time of Restoration

ration should come ; this will infer an intermediate State, in which the Souls of good Men must either not be at all, or remain in a State of Insensibility, or go to God. The first was impossible ; because then (as I have before observed) the same Race that was lost would not have been restored. The second might have been if God had so thought fit ; but no Man can say, that he hath not dealt more graciously with us in chusing the last Method, which immediately after Death places good Men in the Comforts of his Presence, waiting for a State of more exalted Bliss (for such no doubt it will be) when the present State of Things shall have an End.

*Of the Resurrection of the Body.* But this, which seemed a Thing incredible to some of old, may also now seem incredible, that God should raise the Dead : And this is the Point I am next to speak to. Many are the Cavils that have been raised against this Doctrine, by sceptical Men ; to get rid of which, and at the same time to shew, in how strict and perfect a Sense the Resurrection will be the Restoration of Man's original State, nothing more seems needful,

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ful, than to state the Notion of it, as it lies before us in the Scripture.

It should be observed then, in the first Place, that all Men (absolutely) shall not die. So says St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 51. *We shall not all sleep*, i. e. *We shall not all die*. He says indeed, in the same Chapter, ver. 22, that in Adam ALL die. But this means no more, than that by the Sin of Adam all became mortal; or that, all who have died or shall die, have died, or shall die, through his Transgression; for in fact, it is true that all Men (absolutely) have not died. Enoch never died; Elisha never died; both were taken up alive into Heaven, to be Examples to those Ages of God's Goodness to extraordinary Piety, and an Instruction to Mankind, that this State is not the only State intended for us. And as there have been those who have not died, so again there will be those who shall not die; and these are those who shall be found alive when Christ comes, and when Death's Dominion shall be at a full End. Hence Christ is styled the Judge of the Quick and the Dead, 1 Pet. iv. 5. that is, of those who shall have died before



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his Coming, and of those who shall be found alive upon the Earth when he comes, and who shall *not* die. And that St. Paul intended this Distinction, when he said, *We shall not all sleep*, is clear from what we read, *1 Thess. iv. 15. This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the Coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep—For the Dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive, and remain shall be caught up together with them, in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* We see here that the Apostle makes a very plain Distinction between the *Dead*, and those who should be *alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord*: And what he delivers as *from the Lord*, is, that they who thus remain, shall not *prevent* those who are dead, that is, shall not go *before* them into Heaven. The *Dead in Christ* must first rise, and then both the *Quick* and the *Dead* shall all go together. But how shall they go? Cloathed in *Bodies*; but not in *mortal and corruptible Bodies*. For *Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,*  
neither

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*neither doth Corruption inherit Incorruption, as he speaks 1 Cor. xv. 50. What then? It presently follows, We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. ALL shall be changed, both the Living and the Dead. The Dead from their Corruption to Incorruption; and the Living from their mortal to an immortal Nature, as it is said ver. 23. This corruptible must put on Incorruption, and this mortal must put on Immortality. The Bodies of the Dead shall spring forth from their Dust, as from their Seed and first Principle; not Flesh, and Blood, and Skin, and Bones, as they were before, but Bodies of another kind. That which thou sowest, is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that Body that shall be, but bare Grain; it may chance, of Wheat, or of some other Grain; but God giveth it a Body.—So also is the Resurrection of the Dead. It is sown in Corruption, it is raised in Incorruption: It is sown in Dishonour, it is raised in Glory: It is sown in Weakness, it is raised in Power: It is sown a natural Body, it is raised a spiritual Body, ver. 36—44. What the natural Body is, we all know. What the*

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the *spiritual* Body shall be, we cannot tell. But something it will be, suitable to the spiritual and heavenly State, as these Bodies are to the natural and earthly. This Doctrine is also contained in that Passage, *Philip. iii. 21. The Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body.* Christ was raised in his natural and earthly Body, because it was necessary to shew himself alive to his Apostles, who were to be Witnesses to all the World of the Truth of his Resurrection. But when his Work on Earth was finished, even *whilst they beheld him, he was taken up, into Heaven, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight, Acts i. 9.* And then it was that he put on his *glorious* Body, according to the *Likeness* of which, the Bodies of those who shall be found alive at his second Coming, and shall be thought worthy of the Resurrection, shall be fashioned. For so says the same Apostle in the Passage above-cited; *Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord; that is (for so we are to understand it) not in earthly*

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*earthly and corruptible Bodies, but in glorious Bodies, or in earthly and corruptible Bodies made, or become, heavenly and incorruptible. And all that our Apostle has delivered, concerning this Change of the earthly into a heavenly Nature, agrees with what Christ himself says, Luke xx. 35. They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain the Resurrection from the Dead, neither marry nor are given in Marriage, neither can they die any more; for they are EQUAL unto the ANGELS.*

The Doctrine of the Resurrection thus stated, the common Objections against the Possibility of it will immediately vanish. For these Objections are grounded upon the Supposition, that the Idea of a Resurrection implies an entire Restitution of that whole Mass of which our Bodies are composed; the several Parts of which (say the Objectors) are in <sup>k</sup> a perpetual Flux; and

<sup>k</sup> All that is certain in this Matter is, that the Blood and other Juices of the Body are in a perpetual Flux. But, properly speaking, the Blood and Juices are no more constituent Parts of the Body, than Water, or any other Liquor, is a constituent Part of the Pipe or Vessel which contains it. If you will suppose the Vessels, that is, the solid Parts of the Body, emptied after



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after various Changes, the same Portions of Matter, which were once the constituent Parts of one human Body, become the constituent Parts of another human Body. But the Scripture gives no such Idea of the Resurrection as these Men build upon; but only represents our future, heavenly Bodies, as springing from our earthly and corruptible Bodies, in some such manner, as a Plant grows from Seed cast into the Earth; the Possibility of which is very easy to be conceived. What this *Manner* is, we cannot in either Case explain; but the *Fact* we see in the one, and may, without Reproach to our Understanding, believe it in the other.

Let me then close this Head with these two Observations. 1. We see in how

of all their Contents, you will still have a human Body complete; and who will say that this solid Body, or (which is all we want) such a Part, or Portion of it, as may serve for a *seminal Principle*, from whence our future Bodies are to arise; may not, by the Power of God, be preserved from Confusion with the solid Parts, or *seminal Principle*, of any other human Body? Men may talk confidently upon this Subject, but they can know nothing.

full

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full and complete a Sense, the Resurrection will be the Restoration of the original State of Man. It is certain, that though, if *Adam* had not sinned, he would not have returned to his Dust, but enjoyed an endless Life without Dissolution; yet he had from the first an earthly Body as we have. The Fruits of the Earth were appointed for his Sustenance; and he was bid to encrease and multiply, as other Creatures were. What wants constant Reparation, must of Necessity be corruptible in its Nature. The Use of Food supposes that Want, and therefore *Adam* was created with a corruptible Body; nor was he in any other Sense immortal before his Fall, than this, that God had ordained for him the Means of preserving him for ever; and what was to have been his Lot, was to have been the Lot of all his Posterity, supposing them, likewise, as continuing in a State of Innocency. But if *Sin* had never entered into the World, nor *Death by Sin*, how should the human Race have been preserved for ever? In this State of Being, think you? By eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in Marriage? No, surely! For how should this

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this earthly Globe, which is but as a Point, when compared to the universal System, have sustained an infinite Multiplication of immortal Beings? If the human Race had increased as fast as it does now, and as it has done ever since the Creation (and the Supposition of Man's Innocency suggests nothing that should lead us to imagine otherwise: If, I say, Mankind had so increased) and none had died, the Earth would many Ages since have been too narrow for its Inhabitants; and therefore the *natural* (and, as I judge, necessary) Supposition is, that if Man had never sinned, God would (when he saw the proper Time for it) have translated him from this earthly to a heavenly Life; in which case, he must have suffered, in his original State, exactly what the last Race of Men shall suffer, and what the whole Race shall attain unto by the Resurrection from the Dead. His *corruptible* would have *put on Incorruption*, and his *mortal* would have *put on Immortality*.

2. We see from hence the Vanity of that Pretence of Unbelievers, that the Gospel offers us nothing more than what is offered

ferred to us by mere Natural Religion. For the utmost that mere Natural Religion can pretend to, is a State of Retribution, where good Men shall find a Recompence for that unequal Share of Evil which they have suffered in this Life. But I have before observed, that a State of simple Retribution doth not infer a State of Immortality ; and, if it did, there may be an infinite Variety in the Degrees of Happiness in the next World, as there is a very great Variety in the Degrees of it in this. So that unless we precisely knew the Nature of that State to which Man was originally created, and to which the Gospel proposes to restore us, and could ascertain the Measure of that Happiness we shall there enjoy, and which the Scripture describes to be such as *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath entered into the Heart of Man* ; I say, unless we knew this (of which we know, particularly, nothing) and withal were qualified to determine how much it is strictly fit for God to do hereafter for good Men, upon the foot of natural Equity (of which we know just as much) it must be great Folly and Presumption to assure ourselves, that we shall be no  
Gainers



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Gainers by the Offers of God's Grace in *Christ*, when the Difference between what in Mercy we shall receive, and what the very best of us all can challenge as of Right may, for ought we can tell, hold no kind of Proportion the one to the other.

And now let us go one Step farther, and consider the Groundwork of this merciful Dispensation towards us, which the Scripture places (as we have seen) in the BLOOD of JESUS CHRIST, offering himself as a SACRIFICE, ATONEMENT, or PROPITIATION, for the Sins of the World. Should I state this Doctrine according to the Opinion of some modern Christians, I should perhaps find less Difficulty with Unbelievers. But I shall take it according to what is called the *orthodox* (which I believe to be the true Scripture) Account, *viz.* That the Blood of *Christ* is, in the most strict and proper Sense, EFFICACIOUS to the Forgiveness of Sin, and our Reconciliation with God. But I must put you in mind of what I laid down from the first, *viz.* That this Remission of Sin, and Acceptance to God's Favour,

your, which is purchased for us by the Blood of *Christ*, " belongs to those and to those " only, who, being obedient to the heavenly " Call, shall serve God by true Repent- " ance ;" which I *repeat*, because it is the constant manner of Unbelievers to charge it upon this Doctrine, as if it was intended as a SALVO for Sinners, or, in other Words, that, according to the Christian Scheme, the Sacrifice of *Christ* was to serve INSTEAD of a right Behaviour : Whereas it is plain, from the whole Scripture Account, that the Sacrifice of *Christ* only supplies the *Defects* of our Obedience ; it does not *disannul* the Law of God, which no Revelation possibly can. We must do our best, and when we have done so, our Obedience, though imperfect, shall be accepted ; but it is BY, OR THROUGH, the Sacrifice of *Jesus Christ*, without which, being all Sinners, our very best Services would not have been accepted, to a full, and perfect Reconciliation with God. This is the Scripture Doctrine ; and the very Intent of this gracious Dispensation was, by the Assurance of the Remission of our past Sins, to encourage us to Obedience

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for the Time to come. *Christ gave himself for us* (says St. Paul) *that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works,* Tit. ii. 14. And so far is it from Truth and Reason, that the Consideration of *Christ's* dying for us, weakens the natural Obligation to well doing, that it binds it the stronger and the faster upon us; God having acquired a peculiar Interest in us, by this extraordinary Instance of his Love towards us. So the same Apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 19. *Ye are BOUGHT with a Price; THEREFORE glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which ARE GOD'S.* And St. Peter, 1 Ep. i. 12. *Gird up the Loins of your Mind, and be sober, &c. FORASMUCH as ye know that ye were not REDEEMED with corruptible Things, as Silver and Gold, from your vain Conversation — but with THE PRECIOUS BLOOD of Christ.* It is in this Light that the Scripture considers the Case; and in the same Light it must appear to common Sense. If a Father, pitying his extravagant Son, pays his Debts, and releases him from a Gaol; is it a Reason why he should treat him with less Observance?

servance? A wicked and presumptuous Son might make such Use of his Father's Kindness in such a Case; but no one will pretend to say it is a right Behaviour.

Having removed this *Calumny* from the Doctrine under Consideration, we may now proceed to shew the Consistency of it with natural Reason; in order to which, these three Things are to be premised, as plain and evident; *viz.*

1. That this Doctrine does no Injury to *Christ*; for what he did, he did *freely* and *willingly*. So *St. Paul*, 1 *Tim.* ii. 6. He *GAVE* himself a Ransom. So also *Christ* himself, *John* vi. 51. I *GIVE* my *Flesh* for the *Life* of the *World*. His Blood, therefore, was his own free Gift, not forced from him by Constraint; and that you may not think he gave what he had no Right to bestow, he tells us, *Chap.* x. 18. I lay down my *Life* OF MYSELF; I have POWER to lay it down, and I have POWER to take it again; this Commandment have I received of my Father. In human Transactions, if one Man should offer



fer to lay down his Life, to indemnify another, he would offer more than he has a Right to give : But when the Transaction lies between God and Man, HE, being Lord of Life, creates a Right to give, by the Acceptance of what is offered. This was *Christ's* Case, in offering himself as a Ransom for the World. God approved, God accepted, it ; which Acceptance, had he been a common Man, would have sanctified the Gift ; much more when it is considered, that as well he who offered, as he who accepted, was Lord of Life, as will be shewn in the Sequel of this Argument.

2. This Doctrine cancels no Obligation on the Part of Man, in any Point where natural Duty is concerned. For, as I have said before, the Grace of Pardon is not connected, absolutely, to the Sacrifice of *Christ*, but to the Sacrifice of *Christ*, under the Qualification of Repentance in them that believe. Needs must it be so ! For the Gospel supposes us Sinners against God, and declares us under Condemnation because we are Sinners. This is consenting to the natural Obligation of the Law. But had  
*Christ*

*Christ* undertaken, by his Death and Sufferings, to loosen the Bands of the Law, it would, in effect, have been denying this Obligation; for what naturally binds, no Authority can possibly unloose. The Law then stands in full Force, though God is merciful, in forgiving the Breaches of it; and the Sacrifice of *Christ* neither does nor can do more, than qualify us to be fit Objects of this Mercy.

3. This Doctrine supposes no transferring of Guilt, or Merit, from one Person to another. OUR Sin does not become CHRIST'S Sin, by his undertaking the work of our Redemption; nor is his Righteousness in any proper Sense supposed to be OUR Righteousness. Each Person retains his proper, essential Character; HE righteous, and WE Sinners. But the Case is, that HE, though righteous, condescended to be treated as if he had been a Sinner; and that WE, though Sinners, are treated as if we were righteous. This is the Meaning of those Passages in Scripture, where *Christ* is said to be MADE *Sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. 20. to BEAR *our Sins*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. and we to

be MADE *righteous by him* ; the Meaning, I say, of these, and other such like Passages, is no other than this, that *Christ*, by his Sufferings, took away the Punishment due to our Sins, and that by his Righteousness, in thus fulfilling the Purpose of his heavenly Father, our Repentance shall avail to Justification.

These things premised, we may now proceed to the single Point remaining (and upon which the whole Weight of the Difficulty rests) what Relation of Congruity there is between *Christ's* Sufferings, and the Remission of the Sins of Mankind. It is to be understood as agreed on both Sides, that it is suitable to the Goodness of God to forgive Sin ; but the Question is, Upon what Terms ? We say, Upon the Terms of Repentance, conjoined or connected with the Sacrifice of *Christ*, by, or in consideration of which, God is pleased to accept it : But an Unbeliever may ask, What Force, what Virtue is there in *Christ's* Sacrifice, that Repentance might not as well have been accepted without it ?

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In order to give an Answer to this Question, it will be necessary to consider, what is the proper End of Punishment; and whether there is any thing in the Sacrifice of *Christ*, that bears a material Relation to that End. Now the proper End of Punishment, most certainly, is not the Affliction, or Misery of the Transgressor; but the securing to the Law its Dignity, and Authority. This is so true, that, should the Foresight of the Punishment prevent Transgressions; the Intention of the Law would be answered infinitely better, than by Millions of Executions against evil Doers. And it is obvious to common Sense, that in Cases where the Legislator thinks fit to remit the Punishment which the Law prescribes; the Dignity and Authority of the Law will be much better preserved, if the Legislator demands something in the way of COMPENSATION, than if he remits the Punishment, upon the single Consideration of the Offender's Submission. If, in any State, the Legislator should make it a constant Rule, to remit the Punishments due to civil Crimes, upon such easy Terms, it



would (in effect) be such a Relaxation of the Law, that no Government could long stand under such an Administration. Therefore, in well ordered Commonwealths, Punishment, ordinarily, follows the Offence, and Pardons are restrained to particular Cases; and in those Cases, I conceive, the Reason upon which the Pardon is grounded, is not the mere Submission of the Offender; but it is (or ought to be) some concurrent Circumstance, which makes the abating the Rigour of the Law, in those Instances, expedient for the public Good, which is the supreme Rule for all civil Administrations.

The granting Pardons to Delinquents is, in most Commonwealths perhaps, an Act of free Grace; but it is not necessary that it should be so. If a Man has forfeited his Life to the Law, the Magistrate (for any thing that there is in the general Nature of the Thing to hinder) may very justly demand of him, to<sup>1</sup> redeem it by a Sum of

<sup>1</sup>The Law of *Moses* allowed this in one Case. See *Exod. xxi. 30.*

Money;

Money; and in that case it would be the same thing, whether the Offender pays it himself or some other Person pays it for him. For the Money being paid (*ratione Delicti*) on the Score of the Offence, the Law has its Compensation. To come nearer to the Case yet: What if, instead of demanding a Ransom by Money, the Magistrate should declare, that he would not remit the Offence, unless some body else would voluntarily consent to suffer the Law in his stead? Though this would be requiring a Condition (ordinarily) impracticable, and which in justice could not be complied with, because a Man has not a Right over his own Life, as he has over his Money; yet, supposing that a Man had such a Right, and that the Condition were accepted and performed, this being done, on the Behalf of the Offender, *ratione Delicti*, the Law again would have its Compensation; and in both these Cases, it is clear, that *more* is done to secure the Dignity and Authority of the Law, than would have been done, if the Magistrate had granted a free, unconditional Pardon.

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This shews then, that, in order to create a Relation between the Punishment and its proper End, it is not necessary that it should be inflicted PERSONALLY upon the Offender; but that the inflicting it upon his SUBSTITUTE, will answer to the same Effect, where the Legislator sees wise and weighty Reasons so to inflict it. The End of Punishment (as I said before) is to preserve the Law from Contempt; and so far is it from Truth, that it can have no Force or Virtue in order to this End, unless the Punishment falls upon the Offender; that it may have its Use, even when (*morally speaking*) no Offence at all has been committed. A Brute Creature is not (*morally*) capable of an Offence; and yet, when God had sanctified Mount Sinai for the Place of his more immediate Abode, he gave this Law to Moses: *Thou shalt set Bounds to the People round about it, saying, Take heed unto yourselves that ye go not up into the Mount, or touch the Border of it; whosoever toucheth the Mount shall surely be put to Death—whether it be BEAST or Man, it shall not live,* *Exod. xix. 12, 13.*

Another Law, not unlike to this, we have Chap. xxi. ver. 28, *If an Ox gore a Man or a Woman that they die, the Ox shall be surely stoned.* And by our own Laws, if a Man is slain by Misfortune, the very *Instrument* (whatever it be) that caused his Death, is forfeited. These Instances shew, that the Use of Punishment hath no necessary Relation to any antecedent moral Behaviour; and therefore not (precisely) to the antecedent moral Behaviour of the Person that suffers it, supposing him to be a moral Agent. If you except against these Laws, the Resolution is plain and easy. The Mount was sacred by the more immediate Presence of God; and the Life of a Man is sacred, as being made *after the Image of God*; of which these Examples were intended as publick Notices, thereby to preserve to sacred Things their due Reverence. And if the Reverence that is due to God's Person and Laws, may properly be guarded by demanding a Compensation, in the Life of a Brute, or upon the Property of a Man innocent, and even ignorant of the Fact, for which the Compensation is made; I desire to know a Reason why it may not, with the same Propriety, be



be guarded, by demanding and accepting the same in the Person of a SUBSTITUTE? A Substitute cannot be less concerned in an Offence than a Beast, or a Machine, or the innocent Owner of them is; and if a mere accidental Mischief, in which there is (morally) nothing either good or evil, owes something to the Law by way of Compensation; how much more a wilful, deliberate Transgression?

It is upon this Foundation that we are to place that general Law of God, given by *Moses* to the *Jews*, in which he declared, that he would *visit the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children*. With the Justice of this Law I have, at present, nothing to do; but the Use of it, no doubt, lay in this, that it was a constant standing Admonition to the *Jews*, how jealous God was of the Honour of his Laws, the Transgression whereof would be attended with Mischief, not only to the Guilty, but to their Children of many Generations, and even to whole Kingdoms and Nations. *Canaan* was laid under a Curse for the Sin of *Ham*, Gen. ix. 25. The *People of Israel* perished for the Sin of *David*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 15—17.

*Achan*

*Achan* and his Sons were punished together for the Father's Wickedness, *Joshua* vii. 24. *Ahab's* Sin was remitted as to himself, upon his Humiliation, and the Punishment laid upon his Son, *1 Kings* xxi. 29. And we have another remarkable Instance in *David* (in the Matter of *Bathsheba*) upon whose Humiliation and Repentance the Prophet said, *The Lord hath put away thy Sin ; thou shalt not die ; howbeit, because by this Deed thou hast given great Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the Child that is born unto thee shall surely die, 2 Sam. xii. 13, 14.* The Latin Version renders it (more closely to the Original) *Dominus TRANSTULIT peccatum tuum*, the Lord hath transferred thy Sin (*i. e.* the Punishment of it) from thee to thy Son ; and the Reason expressly assigned for it is, lest, if God should remit the Sin without this Compensation, he might seem to set the Authority of his Laws at too low a Price. I do not expect that Unbelievers should subscribe to the Reasonableness of these Proceedings, upon the Authority of the Old Testament, considered as a divine Revelation.

tion. I recite the Facts only as the History records them, leaving the Reason of the Case to rest upon the Considerations already laid before you. And yet there is this Weight in these Instances; that they are full Evidence that, in the Sense of a wise Legislator, and a great Nation, the Notion of VICARIOUS PUNISHMENTS, is not so absurd a Thing as some Men are desirous to represent it. But why do I speak of the *Jews*? All Nations were full of it. There is a famous Instance recorded by several ancient Historians, and cited by *Grotius*, in *Zaleucus*, who, when his Son stood convicted of Adultery, and by a Law of his own making ought to have been deprived of both his Eyes; refused the Request of the *Locrians*, who were desirous that the Punishment should be remitted, and having put out one of his own Eyes, ordered that his Son should lose one of his. The learned Author joins in those high Commendations which all Antiquity give of this Act of *Zaleucus*, with this judicious Exception, viz. That *Zaleucus* was mistaken, in common with the rest of the Heathens, in supposing that he had any  
such

such Right over his own Body. But at the same time he observes (and very justly) that this Instance fully proves, that in the Sense of Antiquity, there was no Impropriety, that one Man should, in certain Cases, bear the Punishment due to another's Offence. Those who would see more Examples from Antiquity, to the same Purpose, may consult the <sup>m</sup> same Author : But that which above all Things shews the Universality of this Notion, is, the universal Use of EXPIATORY SACRIFICES, in which the Lives of Beasts (and sometimes human Creatures) were offered up to the Gods by way of Compensation for Sin. And though this Practice was blended with great Superstition and Impiety, yet it carried with it a tacit Confession, and Intimation to Mankind, that Sin was odious and offensive to the Deity, and that something, besides the Humiliation of the Sinner, was necessary to obtain Remission.

The Application of this Reasoning to the Matter before us, is so plain and obvious, that it needs only to be very briefly men-

<sup>m</sup> *De Satisfact. Christi, Cap. iv.*

tioned



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tioned to you. All Mankind stood as Sinners before God, and as such obnoxious to Death. God in Mercy was pleased that the Punishment should be remitted; but, to preserve the Honour due to his Laws and Government, demands it as a previous Condition, that *Jesus Christ*, to be made manifest in due Time, should be offered up as a Sacrifice. Where is the Absurdity of this? Was it not fit that God should shew Mercy in such a Way, as to give full Proof to his Creatures, that he would abate nothing of the Reverence due to his sovereign Authority? Is not the Compensation required, that Proof? Or would this Point have stood in the same Light if no Compensation at all had been required? You may say, if you please, that a Compensation was not necessary in this Case, and it shall be admitted when you can prove it. But to say that there is no *Force*, no *Virtue*, in requiring a Compensation, to shew the *Rate* that a Legislator sets upon his Authority, is against common Sense. I admit, that in Cases of this Nature there ought to be some visible Proportion between the Offence and the Compensation required. If  
a Man

a Man should be guilty of Treason, and the Magistrate should set a trifling Sum upon his Head, he would expose his Authority to Contempt; upon which Principle, I conceive, it is, that the Apostle says, *It is not possible that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats should take away Sins, Heb. x. 4.* There is not that Dignity in such Sacrifices, as to make them a fit Compensation for the Sins of Men. Such Sacrifices were indeed accepted under the Law; but to what Effect? Not to the purging of the Conscience, but to the purifying of the Flesh. This partial, temporary Remission was, but the Shadow of that full and perfect Remission, which the Gospel holds forth to us; and for the Shadow of a Remission, the Shadow of a Compensation might well serve; for such, and no more, was the *Blood of Bulls and of Goats*. But as the same Apostle observes, Chap. ix. ver. 23. *If the Patterns of Things in the Heavens were purged with these Sacrifices, it was necessary that the heavenly Things THEMSELVES should be purged with BETTER Sacrifices than these.* SUCH WAS the Sacrifice of CHRIST, which ALONE

*is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, Chap. vii. 25.*

But how so? may some one ask. If one Man only had sinned, the Life of another Man might have been admitted as a full Compensation. But what Proportion is there between the Life of one Man and the Sins of the whole human Race? The Question is pertinent, and the Answer is short; *Christ* was not a mere Man, but the SON OF GOD MADE MAN. It is under this Character, that this Epistle to the *Hebrews* (the principal Subject of which is his Priestly Dignity) introduces him with great Solemnity, Chap. i. ver. 1, 2, 3. *God, who at sundry Times, and in divers Manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken unto us by HIS SON, whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things, by whom also he made the Worlds. Who being the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person, and upholding all Things by the Word of his Power, when he had BY HIMSELF PURGED OUR SINS, sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high.* This is he  
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of whom St. *John* writes, in the first Chapter of his Gospel, ver. 1. *In the Beginning was THE WORD, and THE WORD was with God, and the Word WAS GOD—all Things were made by him, and without him was not any Thing made that was made—And THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH and dwelt among us.* And hath not Christ, though born of a Woman, and in that Sense the Son of Man, often called himself THE SON OF GOD? Hath he not said of himself, *Before Abraham was, I am?* John vii. 58. *I and my Father are one?* Chap. x. 30. *I am in the Father and the Father in me?* Chap. xiv. 11. *I came down from Heaven to do the Will of him that sent me?* Chap. vi. 38. *The Son of Man came down from Heaven and is in Heaven?* Chap. iii. 13. It is upon these Characters (which, in respect of that Nature which he had from the Beginning, bespeak him to be nothing less than the VERY ESSENTIAL GOD) that the Scripture places the Value of Christ's Sacrifice. As to what Unbelievers may object to the Doctrine of Christ's Divinity, I shall in due time consider it, so far as I am at present concerned



in it. But, the Doctrine admitted, nobody can say that, supposing God was determined to accept of a Compensation for the Sins of Mankind, the Sacrifice of *Christ* was not a Compensation proportionable; for it has in it all the Value, all the Dignity, that any Compensation can have. And surely it must be an illustrious Example to Mankind (which no thinking Person can overlook) how great was that Love by which we are redeemed, at so high a Price; how great that Wrath against Sin, which was not to be put away without so rich a Sacrifice. So the Scripture teaches us to reason. *In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him, 1 John iv. 9.* And our Saviour; *God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, John iii. 16.* This is speaking after the Manner of Men. If a Father gives up the Life of his Son to the Good of his Country, it is a great Instance of Love, because Love is hereby seen to prevail against fatherly Affection: And though God the Father, being void of all Passion, hath not what  
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we call *the Bowels* of a Father, and could not therefore feel that Reluctance, and Uneasiness, which earthly Parents feel on such Occasions, yet, since *Christ* was a Person in Rank and Dignity immediately next to himself, it yields exactly the same Construction. The Condescension was infinitely great, and therefore the Love proportionable. *He made himself of NO REPUTATION*, says the Apostle, *and being found in the Fashion of a Man, he HUMBLED himself*, Phil. ii. 7, 8. In this lies the Stress of the Argument; and an Argument it is of the greatest Force, to beget in our Minds the most full and perfect Reliance upon the divine Goodness, whilst our Behaviour is such as qualifies us for it; as on the other hand, to convince us what we are to expect if we despise the Riches of his Grace, and when he hath saved us, we will not be saved. For *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things?* Rom. viii. 32. And the Argument will be as cogent if you put it the other Way, thus, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how*

shall he spare Us, if we neglect so great Salvation? *Heb. ii. 3.*

Whether God could not have saved Mankind in any other Way than this; or whether the Account I have given of this Dispensation, comes fully up to the Views and Intentions of his Providence; what Mortal shall pretend to say! What I would prove (and what, I trust, I have proved) is, that there is a plain and visible Relation in Reason and common Sense, between *Christ's* bearing the Punishment of our Sins, as our VICAR and SUBSTITUTE, and the End of Punishment, when it is considered as inflicted upon the Transgressors themselves; as it does *Honour* to the Majesty and Authority of God, and sets before Us (whom he *therefore* saved from Death, that he might also rescue us from Sin and Corruption) as in a lively Picture (of far more Force than naked Precept) the strongest Testimony that can be given, both of his Goodness and his Severity; the one, to encourage us to hope well, the other to keep us from Presumption. But we are to remember that the same Gospel, which

which declares this Method of Salvation, declares it also to be a MYSTERY; and there is in it something so great, so awful, so far exceeding every thing that we know of human Things, that one would most naturally suppose, that there are Reasons that lie hid in the Bosom of Providence, then to be made manifest, when the whole Scene of Things, as they respect God's universal Government, comes to be laid open, and the several Parts of it compared together. *St. Paul* tells us, that *NOW we know in PART*, and *see through a Glass DARKLY*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And what is there in this Confession, that can give just Cause of Offence? What if you cannot search to the Bottom of this Mystery, will you therefore reject it as incredible? By what Rule of Proceeding in other Cases can this be justified? We must all confess (and by almost every Action of our Lives, every Day do confess) that human Wisdom hath its certain Limits beyond which it cannot go. And how strange a Thing is it, that, when we see Wonders in almost every Part of the Creation, we should find it hard to believe,



that there may be something in the Work of our Redemption too, that is of too high a Nature for human Minds to comprehend! There is certainly as much Sense in turning Atheist, because we cannot account for the Works of the Creation, as there is in rejecting the Gospel, because we cannot understand the whole Work of our Redemption; and it is to be apprehended, that the same perverse Turn of Mind that leads to the one, prepares the Way for the other,—Here then my Province ends, and it will be fit that I close up this Argument.

We have now carried our Enquiries from the first State of Man in Paradise, to the last Act of our Saviour's Life. We have shewn the Loss of Immortality by Sin, and its Restoration by the Resurrection from the Dead, through the Propitiation of *Jesus Christ*, who was made a Sacrifice for Sin, and hath purchased eternal Redemption for us. The Redemption (as we have said) belongs to those, "who, "being obedient to the heavenly Call, shall "return back to the Law from whence  
" they

“they have swerved, and serve God by true  
“Repentance.” But they that shall reject  
the Gospel are yet under the Curse; and  
shall be punished with everlasting Destruction,  
from the Presence of the Lord, when  
he shall be revealed from Heaven with his  
mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Ven-  
geance on them that know not God, and that  
obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

THIS EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT  
decreed against the Disobedient and Re-  
fractory, is what we properly term the  
SANCTION of the Law of Christ; the  
Severity of which gives great Offence to  
Unbelievers; upon what reasonable Grounds  
we are in due Time to consider. But pre-  
viously to what is to be offered upon this  
Head, it must be enquired, whether the  
Law be in itself just; and whether we are  
furnished with proper Encouragements,  
and suitable Assistances, to qualify us to ful-  
fil it. For if in all, or in any of these re-  
spects, the Gospel should be found defect-  
ive, the Severity of the Sanction cannot  
stand with Reason and Equity.

Let

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*Of the Equity of the Law of Christ, as to the Matter of it.*

Let us begin then with the Law; which is well set forth in those few, but comprehensive Words of the Apostle, *Tit. ii. 11, 12. The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men; teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World.* This is the great Burden that Unbelievers complain of: This, the *Rock of Offence*, upon which many stumble and fall. I do not pretend to decide upon particular Cases; but I think I shall not pass an uncharitable Judgment, if I say, that there would be much less Fault found with the Gospel Evidence, if many had not an irreconcilable Aversion to its practical Rules and Precepts. If *Christ* had offered a Religion to the World that should have left full Scope and Liberty to sensual Appetite; though, to wise and considerate Men, such an Indulgence would have been an Objection against it not to be got over; yet, with those who are well enough contented that there should be Religion, but are not willing

ling it should cost them much (which, I am afraid, are the greater Part of Mankind) the Gospel would have found Admittance upon very easy Terms. But to talk to Men of a sensual Turn of Mind, of restraining Appetite, and contradicting Flesh and Blood, this is like *pulling out a right Eye, or cutting off a right Hand*. Such as these will dispute every Inch; and, as it is natural for them, under this kind of Byass, to require more Evidence than the Gospel has (or it is fit it should have) to give; no wonder that, in proportion as their Virtues leave them, their Faith also fails them. If a Man has Virtue, his Faith would be the greatest of Comforts to him. But Faith, and a Conscience that stands condemned by a Law admitted by one's self, are troublesome Companions, and cannot long hold together.

Let us try, then, to ease the Gospel of this Prejudice, so fatal to Millions, and yet of so little Weight, if Men will attend to Reason. My general Observation is, that whatever there may be in this Difficulty, it can with no sort of Justice be charged upon



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upon Christianity specially: For the Gospel does not make the Difficulty, but finds it. If *Jesus* had never preached, or been preached to Mankind, they would have had Appetites, and a Law within themselves to restrain those Appetites; as *St. Paul* speaks, *Rom. ii. 14. For when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law; these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves, &c.* Right and Wrong are not of arbitrary Appointment, but founded in the Nature and Constitution of Men and Things. Now if there is naturally a Law declaring Right, there must, of course, be a Law declaring a Restraint of Appetite within the Limits of that Right. And what more does the Gospel say? We are bidden to *abstain from fleshly Lusts—to mortify our Members—to crucify the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts*, and the like. What does all this mean? That Appetite is never to be gratified? No surely! For God hath made nothing in vain. If he hath given us Appetite, there must be some Use of Appetite, and therefore, some proper Way of gratifying Appetite. All, then, that the Gospel  
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can mean, is, that we should deny Appetite when it would carry us beyond our natural Limits; which is referring us to the natural Law, as our proper Rule in such Cases. The Gospel enjoins moral Duties; it no where defines them. It commands us to be sober, just, and temperate; it does not explain what Sobriety, Justice, and Temperance are, but *refers* to them, as things well known and understood by the Light of every Man's Mind. A very evident Proof, that, in this respect, the natural Law, and the Law of the Gospel are one and the same.

It was necessary to take notice of this, that Men may see what is the true Construction of this Prejudice; and to what Lengths it will carry them, if pursued to its utmost Consequences. It will not serve them to lay aside the Gospel. They must give up with it Natural Religion too; which, perhaps, is what many do not well consider at first setting out. Their Leaders tell them, that, when they are once rid of the Gospel, they have nothing else to do but to *follow Nature*. This, they say, is  
*Natural*

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*Natural Religion* ; and they would say well if they meant honestly. But what is *following Nature*? Do you mean being governed by Appetite? If you do not; what do you gain by laying aside the Gospel? If you do; how comes being governed by Appetite, to be the same thing with following Nature? Is nothing natural to Man but Appetite? Is not Reason just as natural? If this is the Case; to follow Appetite against Reason, is not following Nature, but acting against Nature; for to direct is the natural *Use* of Reason. It is not so when Reason controuls Appetite; because, to be indulged without Limits is not the natural *Use* of Appetite. Appetite was given to excite and move to such Actions as are suitable to our natural Wants; as Hunger to excite us to eat; Thirst to excite us to drink; both which are necessary to the Support of the animal Life. But these Things have their Limits assigned them by Nature, beyond which if we go, the very End of them is perverted; and what should restrain us within these Limits, but Reason? This shews, that to restrain Appetite within the Bounds that Reason

Reason prescribes to it, is the true, natural State of a Man, as distinguished from a Brute; and in this must Natural Religion consist, if you are in earnest that there is any such thing. Now, this Principle admitted, the Bounds of Appetite will lie just where the Gospel has placed them, whether you receive it, or whether you receive it not. For the Gospel forbids no Indulgence of Appetite which Reason allows, but is (as I have before said) thus far, and in this respect, the very Law of Nature itself.

This shews then the Mistake of those, who fancy, that, in respect of sensual Indulgence, Christianity is a <sup>n</sup> severer Law than the Law of Nature. But the more effectually to confute this Prejudice, let us enter a little more distinctly into the particular

<sup>n</sup> Trypho the Jew pretended, that the Law of Christ is such high-strained Morality as to be impracticable; ὅμων δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ Ἐυαγγελίῳ παραγγέλματα θανάτου εἶναι καὶ μεγάλα ἐπίστανται εἶναι ὡς ὑπολαμβάνειν μηδὲν δύνανται φυλάξαι αὐτά. Vid. Justin. Mari. cum Tryph. dialogus, p. 32. Ed. Jebb.

Heads



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Heads of the Christian Doctrine in this respect. These are (chiefly) collected together by our Saviour himself, in his Sermon on the Mount, which we find recorded in the fifth, sixth, and seventh Chapters of St. *Matthew's* Gospel; and from thence I shall select such Points as seem most liable to Exception.

The first concerns the Intercourse between the Sexes; upon which it is pretended, that the Law of *Christ* is a heavy and unreasonable Restraint. But upon what Reasons is this Complaint grounded? *Christ* has not forbidden Marriage, though some of his Followers have; and his Apostle recommends it as *honourable among all Men*. But the Fault may be, that the Gospel insists upon Marriage as previous to this Commerce; and will not suffer Men and Women to range together like Herds of Cattle. But is it not most evident to common Sense, that the very Difference between the natural State of Men and other living Creatures, points out a different Way of acting in this Case? The Beasts are left to propagate their Kind as it may happen. For why?

why? God feedeth and cloatheth the Cattle by an Act of his Providence, without any Labour or Forecast of their own; and what do the young ones want, but the Milk of the Dam for a little Space, which Nature herself stretches forth to them with a liberal Hand? Man is born a Creature quite helpless; and Years must pass, before he will be able to provide himself with the common Necessaries of Life. And as he is insufficient for his own natural Wants, so he is also for his own Instruction in that kind of Behaviour, which is proper to him as a reasonable Creature, sent into this World, not to live and die like a Brute, but to be the Servant of God, and an useful Member of human Society. From this Circumstance in the Condition of Man (peculiar to himself) originally flows the Duty of Parents towards their Children; who, by the common Law of Nature, are bound to do that for them which they are not able to do for themselves. And this Care, whether it concerns the Wants of the Body, (or (which is a Matter not of the lowest Consideration) the Improvements of the Mind, is alike incumbent upon both Pa-

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rents ;

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rents; because they have both the same natural Relation to their Children.

From hence then ariseth this Precept of Nature, restraining this kind of Commerce, *viz.* That it should never be carried on in such a Way as hinders Procreation, and ministers merely to carnal Appetite; or introduces an Uncertainty of Property in the Offspring; or which supposes an Inattention to that Care, which Nature hath laid upon Parents towards their Children. And farther; as every Person that is born into the World, has a natural Right to the Means of Preservation, from the Parents first, or, if they fail, from the Society in which they are born; this gives to Society so far an Interest in this Case, as to have a Right to know between whom this Commerce is intended to be carried on, and to have such Intention previously declared by some publick Form; that, in case Parents should be negligent in the Care of their Children, the Community (which stands next in charge) may understand to whom to have Recourse for Redress; that the innocent and helpless may not be left to perish,



perish, or the Burden of them be cast upon those who have no Obligation to maintain them. And when such Forms are settled by publick Authority, to carry on this Commerce in Contempt of it, is an Act of Defiance to Society, and consequently an Offence to God, the Author of Society.

From these Principles of natural Right, which are plain and easy, I should hope the Question may be so far determined, as that Concubinage out of the Bounds of lawful Wedlock, will be thought to have no Pretence to plead Privilege by the Law of Nature; the ill Effects of which to Society are so sensibly felt, that all Societies think themselves concerned to guard against it. Even in °Heathen Nations it passed not

° Περὶ ἀφροδισία εἰς διακρίν, πρὸ γὰρ κατασκευασθέντος ἀπομένω δὲ, ὡς νόμιμον ἐστὶ μηταληγέον;  
lays *Epictetus, Enchir. xvii.* This is a Discouragement of Fornication, not an absolute Prohibition; and it is certain (and this Passage shews) that the Civil Laws of the ancient Heathen States tolerated it under certain Regulations; not because it was considered as void of all moral Turpitude (for, had this been the Case, there would have been no room for the Advice



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without Reproach ; and in how ill Repute it was in the most ancient Times, we may learn from the History of Judah, recorded *Gen. xxxviii.* who, when he had defiled his Daughter in Law, whom he took for a Harlot, behaved as one who stood condemned by his own Conscience ; and

that follows, *μη μέλοι, ἐπ' αὐτῆς γίνεαι τῆς χερσὶν ἐλκυστικῆς, &c.* (but) because it was thought proper to manage what could not thoroughly be cured : Upon which Principle, publick Stews are tolerated in some Christian Countries at this Day. If a Woman lost her Character in this respect, it was the Ruine of her Fortunes.

*Quod secunda ei dos erat*

*Pariit. Pro virgine dari nuptum non potest.*

Ter. Adelph. Act. iii. Scen. 2.

And therefore, to debauch the Daughter of a Freeman was looked upon as a very high Offence.

*An paulum hoc esse tibi videtur, virginem*

*Vitiare civem ?*

Eun. Act. v. Sc. 2. See also Adelph. Act. iii. Sc. 5.

But foreign Women were allowed to keep Houses of publick Resort : And yet, to frequent such Places was looked upon as a Fault, which (like disorderly Behaviour of other kinds) might be excused in young Men ; not as a thing to be justified.

*Non est flagitium—Adolescentulum*

*Scortari, neque potare ; non est neque fores*

*Effringere.*

Adelph. Act. i. Scen. 2.

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would (if the thing should be known) be condemned by the common Voice of Mankind. He had left in her Hand a Pledge for her Reward; and when he sent to redeem it, and the Woman was not found;

But if Whoredom was not reckoned among the *Flagitia*, the *heinous* Offences, it was an Offence, and is here treated as such; for who will say that Riot and Drunkenness (which are here likewise excused) are not Breaches of the natural Law; or were not then so esteemed? The Commonness of this Vice made it less minded, as it does now; but still it was a Disgrace, and nobody, but the most abandoned, cared to be seen in it.

*An ea quoque dicetur hujus, si una hæc dedecori est parum!*  
Heauton. Act. ii. Scen. 2.

*Amavit; at id clam, Cavet ne unquam Infamiæ Ea res sibi esset.*  
Andr. Act. ii. Scen. 6.

And so strong was the Sense of the natural Turpitude of this Practice, that even their wicked Theology could not efface it. When the young Rake was boasting to his Companion of an amorous Adventure, and saying, that he found in his Mistress's Chamber the Picture of *Jupiter* coming down to *Danae* in a golden Shower; he makes this Remark,

*Ego Homuncio hoc non facerem? Ego vero illud feci,*  
Eun. Act. iii. Scen. 5.

But Men never quote great Examples to justify themselves, unless they are conscious that the public Voice is against them.

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he forbids all farther Enquiry after her, saying, *Let her take it to her, lest we be ASHAMED*, ver. 23. And in the Case of *Dinah*, whom *Hamor* defiled, the Sons of *Jacob* give this Reason for the desperate Revenge they took; *Should he deal with our Sister as with an HARLOT?* *Gen. xxxiv.*

31. The common Interpretation here is, that *Hamor*<sup>p</sup> offered Violence to *Dinah*; and the learned *Selden*<sup>q</sup>, and others after him, have observed, that unless this had been the Case, there would have been no just Ground for the Quarrel; because (as the *Jewish* Doctors teach) before the Law of *Moses*, the Right of Nations was not violated by a Man's having Commerce with a single Woman, provided it were by her free Consent, and no civil Law intervened. But this ill agrees with the Speech of *Jacob's* Sons: For to compel a

<sup>p</sup> But the Words in the Original imply nothing of *Violence*. The Verb which is rendered *he took*, is often applied to marrying lawful Wives. And the other Verb, which is translated *defiled*, is only a modest Word for having had carnal Knowledge of a Woman.

<sup>q</sup> *De Jur. Nat.* Lib. vii. cap. 5.

Woman

Woman by Force is not *dealing with her as with an Harlot*, but using her a great deal worse; and, as the Resentment of these two Brothers did not dispose them to palliate the Offence, it is probable, that, if this had been the Case, they would have spoke of it in stronger Terms. This, however, shews, that a Harlot in those Times was an infamous Character; and so the Rabbies in effect confess, when they say, that though *Dinah* did not consent, and therefore was no Harlot, "yet, in consequence of this Transaction, she would have "passed as such among the *Hivites*," and that this was the Reason of the Anger and Revenge of her two Brothers: This Answer, I say, admits, that in those Times an Harlot was an infamous Character, as the other Case shews, that having Concern with a Harlot was infamous: For *Maimonides* deserves no Regard, who pretends, that when *Judah* said, *Let her take it to her, lest we be ASHAMED*, no more is meant than that, "in Matters of this kind, even "though they are lawful, we ought not "to speak but with *Modesty*:" For if what he lays down be true, that in those Days



"Commerce with a Whore was as Com-  
 "merce with a Man's Wife; and the  
 "Wages of an Harlot, as the Portion which  
 "was given to a Wife when she was put  
 "away by Divorce." If, I say, this scan-  
 dalous Assertion was true, there could surely  
 have been no Breach of Modesty, if *Judah*,  
 when the Woman (whom he knew not  
 then to have been his Daughter in Law)  
 was not found, had made further Enquiry  
 after her, to take back the Pledge which he  
 had left in her Hand, and to pay her the  
 Price she had contracted for. Both In-  
 stances then come fully up to our Purpose;  
 the one shewing, that *Jacob* thought he  
 had disgraced himself by having Commerce  
 with an Harlot; and the other, that the  
 Sons of *Jacob* looked upon *Hamor*, in that  
 Intercourse with their Sister, whilst they  
 were yet unmarried, as having brought a  
 Disgrace upon their Family. If you say,  
 that this was not from any natural Turpi-  
 tude that there was in this Sort of Com-  
 merce, but because it was an Offence a-  
 gainst the civil Laws of those Countries;  
 it will nothing help you; because it ought  
 to be presumed, that such Laws were not  
 mere

mere arbitrary Constitutions, as about Things in their own Nature indifferent, but founded upon Conviction, that such Liberties with unmarried Women were Violations of the original Law of Nature. Let *Maimonides* himself be heard upon this Point; who, speaking of the Reason why this Liberty was restrained by the Law of *Moses*, says it was, “because by Whoredom Families are confounded and destroyed, and their Issues are by all Men treated as Aliens—than which nothing can be worse for them and for their Parents.” That “for preventing the many Brawls and Quarrels, Fightings and Bloodshed” to which Whoredom leads the Way, “and that the Distinction of Families might be preserved, both Whores and Whoremongers are condemned; and no other Conjunction permitted, but with a Man’s own Wife publicly married.” These are Reasons which eternally hold, and which suit all Nations and People, as well as the *Jews*; which it is strange that this Rabbi should

See *Patr. on Deut. xxiii. 17.* and *Selden, De Jur. Nat. Lib. v. Cap. 4.*

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not have seen, or, if he did see it, it is as strange that he should have given so loose an Account of the Morals of the ancient Times, in this Particular.

It is however admitted, that among the *Jews* all Commerce, but with a Man's own lawful Wife, was forbidden. And the Law indeed is very express as it stands *Deut. xxiii. 17. There shall be NO WHORE of the Daughters of Israel, nor a SODOMITE* [or, as the Word may be translated, WHORE-MONGER] *of the Sons of Israel.* And again, *Levit. xix. 29. Do not prostitute thy Daughter to cause her to be a Whore, lest the Land fall to Whoredom, and the Land become full of Wickedness.* Agreeably to which; the Prophet *Jeremiab*, when he would represent a very wicked and corrupted State of the *Jewish* Nation, gives it as one Part of his Description, that *they assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses, Jer. v. 7.* I so much the rather take notice of this, (because it is customary with Unbelievers, on this Head, to set the Law of God at Variance with itself; the Old Testament against the New. But, however they



they may differ as to some Points, by and by to be mentioned, it is certain that this vague, promiscuous Commerce, of which we are now speaking, and by which nothing is meant but the gratifying a present, brutal Appetite, is as directly condemned by the Law of *Moses*, as it is by the Law of *Christ*. *Solomon*, no doubt, wrote according to the Maxims of the Dispensation he was under; and where do you find stronger Warnings against this Vice than in his Book of *Proverbs*? The Passages are too well known to need repeating.—But what then? you will say. Do we not, as well before as under the Law, read of Men's having *Concubines* as well as *Wives*? Had not *Abraham*, *Jacob*, *David*, *Solomon*, and others, their *Concubines*? And is this Practice any where reprehended as criminal? Very true. But these *Concubines* were not *Harlots*, but *Wives*; and so they are frequently called in Scripture. So *Keturah*, who is reckoned among *Abraham's* *Concubines*, *Gen. xxv. 6.* (and is called so, *1 Chron. i. 32.*) is at the first Verse of the same Chapter styled his *Wife*. The single Point of Difference between a *Wife* and a *Concubine* is intimated



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 mated in his History, ver. 5, 6. where it  
 is said, that *Abraham* gave all that he had  
 unto *Isaac*, but unto the Sons of the Concu-  
 bines which *Abraham* had (viz. of *Hagar*  
 and *Keturah*) *Abraham* gave Gifts, and  
 sent them away. The Issue by the Wife  
 had greater Privilege, in respect of the In-  
 heritance, than the Issue of the Concubine ;  
 and the Wife herself had greater Privilege  
 in respect of Dowry, and Rank in the Fa-  
 mily<sup>t</sup>. But in nothing did they differ in  
 which the Marriage Bond was essentially  
 concerned. For even in the Case of a Con-  
 cubine, the Man was bound to provide for  
 her and her Children, and she to be faithful  
 to his Bed ; in which Point if she trans-  
 gressed, she was looked upon as an Adul-  
 tress. This appears from several Cases  
 recorded in Scripture. *Reuben*<sup>t</sup> lay with  
*Bilhah*, his Father's Concubine, Gen. xxxv.  
 22. which *Jacob* censures as wicked and

<sup>t</sup> *Concubina*, apud Hebræos, Stupri aut Lege aut  
 Infamiâ, non tenebatur, cum a *Mâtesfamiliâs* tan-  
 tum *Dignitate* distaret, et eo quod liberis ex eâ natis  
 Jus non esset succedendi patribus in rebus soli. *Græc.*  
 in *Matt.* v. 32.

<sup>t</sup> See the same Case in *Absalom*, 2 *Sam.* xvi. 21, 22.  
 incestuous ;

incestuous; for she was his *Wife*. Chap. xxx. 4. and xlix. 4. The *Levite's Concubine* is said to have *played the Whore against him*, Judg. xix. She was therefore his *Wife*; and as such she is spoken of in the Sequel of the History. For he is called her *Husband* in the next Chapter, ver. 4. and her *Father* is called his *Father-in-law*, in this Chapter, ver. 47. So true it is, what *Selden* says, that a *Concubine* in those Days differed from a *Wife*, *nomine tenus duntaxat, aut saltem dignitatis tantum minoris ratione*—*Jugalem autem contractum nodumque, utrique eundem ipsum fuisse*, that is, “in Name only, or, at least, in respect of inferior Dignity only; but that the *Marriage Bond*, in regard to both, was the same.”

• *Ibid.* Lib. vii. Cap. 5. And the *Hebrew Word* which we translate *Concubine*, agrees with this Account. For *Pilegesh* is usually derived from *Palag*, to divide, and *Isha*, *Woman*, or *Wife*. So that *Pilegesh* is, as it were, a *half Wife*, or a *Wife of a middle Condition*. In some respects differing from a *Wife* eminently so called, in others the same; as has been above explained.

The

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The Objection then at last comes to this; that anciently Men had more Wives than one: And this Liberty is indeed restrained by the Gospel. For St. Paul says, *To avoid Fornication let every Man have his own Wife, and let every Woman have her own Husband,* 1 Cor. vii. 2. For a Woman to have more Husbands than one at once, was always unlawful; and the Apostle very plainly puts both Man and Woman upon the same Foot in this respect, without Difference or Distinction. The like Restraint is implied in those Words of our Saviour, *Matt. xix. 9. Whosoever shall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication, and shall marry another, committeth Adultery; and who so marrieth her which is put away, doth commit Adultery.* As this is a direct Prohibition of Divorce (excepting as is elsewhere in the same Law excepted, of which hereafter) so it implies under it, I say, a Prohibition of Polygamy; for no Reason can be given why a Man's marrying a second Wife, after having divorced the first, should be Adultery, but this; that the Right of the first Wife still subsisting,



subsisting, notwithstanding the Divorce (which our Saviour considers as a mere Nullity) such a Man would, of course, have two Wives at once; and to treat this as Adultery, is in effect declaring the second Match to be unlawful. Here then arises a Question: How comes Christ to forbid what the Law of Moses allowed? And let our Saviour himself give the Answer. *Moses, because of the Hardness of your Hearts, suffered you to put away your Wives; but from the Beginning it was not so. For have ye not read, that he which made them at the Beginning, made them Male and Female, and said, For this Cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his Wife, and they Twain shall be one Flesh? Wherefore they are no more Twain, but one Flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not Man put asunder, ver. 4—10.* The Answer will alike serve to both of the Points in Question; and no doubt it was our Saviour's Intention to say, that neither the putting away a Man's Wife (excepting as before) nor having more Wives than one at once, is agreeable to the original Institution of Marriage. But how so? you will

ask.



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ask. Either these Things agree with the  
Natural Law, or they do not. If they do,  
why does Christ say, *From the Beginning*  
*it was not so*? Or what Ground will there  
be for his Prohibition? If they do not,  
how does it stand with God's moral Gov-  
ernment, that Moses should have suffered  
them? Can God, consistently with the  
Perfection of his Nature, at any time dis-  
pense with the Natural Law? To this my  
Answer is, that these Things do indeed con-  
sist with the Natural Law; but they so  
consist with it, as not to reach to the Per-  
fection of that State, which was originally  
intended by Providence in making Man  
Male and Female. The vague, promiscu-  
ous Commerce (as I have heretofore ob-  
served) crosses the first and principal End  
of Marriage; either as hindering Pro-  
creation; or as introducing an Uncertainty  
of Property in the Offspring; or as suppos-  
ing an Inattention to that Care, which Na-  
ture hath laid upon Parents towards their  
Children. This therefore never was, nor  
ever can be permitted. But none of these  
Things can be objected to the Practice of  
having more Wives at once than one, which  
perfectly

perfectly well consisting with the Certainty of Property, and competently well with the parental Care, might therefore (for Reasons of Providence) be permitted. And yet because there are manifest Inconveniences in this State, to which that of one Wife to one Man is not liable, this Practice might again be restrained, the Reasons ceasing upon which the Permission was grounded. The like may be said of Divorce. For a Man's putting away his Wife introduces no Uncertainty of Property as to the Offspring already born; and though it be true, that in consequence of the Separation, the parental Care which Nature hath bound equally upon both Parties, devolves upon one; yet the supposed Ground of Divorce brings this Matter much to the same Reckoning. For a Man may as well (and perhaps better) provide for his Children by his own sole Industry, as in Company with an unequal Yoke-fellow.

But though these Things are tolerable, still they are Deviations from the original Plan intended by Providence. *From the Beginning it was not so.* It is said in the

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Book of *Genesis*, that God created Man *Male and Female*; that is, he gave one Woman to one Man, Chap. i. ver. 27. Of other living Creatures this is not said, They are only bid to *be fruitful and multiply*; and there might at first have been more Females than Males, for any thing that the History shews to the contrary. But one plain Distinction there is between Man and other living Creatures, which is, that as they, both Male and Female, were created out of the Earth, or Waters, the Man was made out of the Dust of the Earth, and the Woman taken out of the Substance of the Man; to denote that close and intimate Union intended between Man and Wife, which, between the Male and the Female in other kinds of Animals, neither was, nor could be intended. Upon which the Historian makes the Remark cited by our Saviour, *Therefore shall a Man leave his Father and his Mother, and shall cleave unto his Wife, and they shall be one Flesh; i. e. they shall be as one Flesh*; which excludes both *Multiplicity and Separation*, Gen. ii. 24.

Consult



Consult Nature in its first and most simple Motions, and you will find it agrees with this Appointment. The natural Passion directs itself to one, as distinguished from all others of the same Sex; and even when Men indulge themselves the Liberty of having more Wives than one, the Affection commonly settles in one. Whence this Provision in Nature (of which we find no Footsteps among the Brutes) but to shew that one Woman to one Man is our proper, natural State? Again; the conjugal Affection is observed to grow and improve by Years, unless checked by some irregular Passion, especially if Children are born, the great Cement which holds Man and Wife together. And what does this shew less, than that as the Children have a Claim upon their Parents, that never dies till the Relation ceases; so the Relation between Man and Wife (upon which this other Relation is founded) should never cease, till the Hand of Providence puts an End to it? And as the natural Workings of human Passions best correspond with this State, so Providence has set a strong Guard about it, by the na-



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tural Want which the Man and the Woman have of each other's Assistance. Brute wants not the Help of Brute, for Food, or for Raiment, or for any other Comfort of Life. If there are Exceptions to this Rule, they are of very short Continuance, and then Nature unites them together by a kind of Marriage. We see this in many Creatures of the feathered Kind, where the Male attends the Female to feed and protect her, during the Time of her hatching her young. But Man and Wife constantly want each other's Help. The Woman wants the Man for Maintenance and Protection; and the Man wants the Woman, prudently to dispense to the Uses of his Family what he providently gathers: To be the Partner of his Cares and of his Comforts; his Help and Companion through every Stage of Life. And with how much a purer Stream the Blessings of the conjugal State will flow, when Affection is not divided among many, but united in one, a very little Reflection upon human Nature, or Observation of what commonly passes in the World, will serve to shew. But though these Considerations prove this to be

be the most perfect State, they will not prove that a State less perfect may not be dispensed with. God knows what is best for Man much better than he knows it himself; and if he will pursue the Method that simple, uncorrupted Nature points out to him, he will find the Benefit of it. Whenever he acts otherwise there is always something wrong in the Cause; as in the Matter now before us. For (excepting the Want of Issue) what but mere Wantonness of Appetite can lead a Man to covet more Wives than one? What, to desire a Separation, but ill Behaviour in one Party or the other, or in both? But if, for want of a proper Government of themselves, Men disqualify themselves for enjoying the Blessings of the married State, in that Perfection which Nature intended they should enjoy them; this indeed is a great Reproach to their Conduct; but neither the Wisdom nor Justice of Providence will suffer any Impeachment, if, to avoid, it may be, worse Evils, they are not presently called to stricter Discipline, so long as the principal Ends of Marriage are preserved, and that brutal, lawless Indulgence

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is restrained, which, in the noblest Part of God's Works, would destroy the very Purpose of his Creation.

When it was that *Polygamy* first began to be in Use, or upon what Occasion it was introduced, we have not Evidence enough in History to inform us. *Adam*, it is certain, had but one Wife; *Noah* and his Sons, when they went into the Ark, had each but one \* Wife; and in this whole Period between the Creation and the Flood, there is but one Instance upon Record, of any Person's having more than one Wife, and that is *Lamech*, who was a Descendant from *Cain*, and (as it may be presumed) no very good Man. In the Time of *Abraham* it seems to have been customary. His Brother *Nabor* had two Wives, that is, a Wife and a † Concubine. He himself had two. And that this was not peculiar to his Family the History of *Abimelech* shews; for he had a \* Wife, at the Time when he sent and took *Sarah* with Intent to make her his Wife. One cannot

\* See *Gen.* vii. 13.

† See *Gen.* xxii. 24.

‡ *Chap.* xx. ver. 17.

read



read this Part of the sacred Story without observing, in what Detestation the Sin of Adultery was held in those Days. God threatens nothing less than Destruction to *Abimelech* and his House, unless he restored to *Abraham* his Wife. *Abimelech* confesses the Justice of the Sentence in respect of the Sin, but pleads his Innocency in that he knew her not to be a married Woman, nor had indeed defiled her. With like Severity the Law of *Moses* was formed, by which it is ordered, that both the Man and the Woman should *be put to Death*, Levit. xx. 10. And this is all, I hope, that is needful to be said upon this Vice, which, though common in Practice, is so flagrant a Violation of natural Right, that none but the most abandoned will pretend to justify it. But *Polygamy*, it is certain, was not looked upon as a Crime in those Days; nor, strictly speaking, was it so. For there was no positive Law of God which forbade it; and in the Nature of it, it is something of the middle kind, neither simply and absolutely unlawful, nor yet fit to be encouraged. Nor do we find that God ever bestowed upon it any Marks of his



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Approbation. The Old Testament records the Practice; but of the Fitness or Unfitness of it nothing at all is said. When *Nathan* the Prophet represented to *David* the great Mercies of God towards him, in order to raise in him a Sense of his Ingratitude, he tells him indeed, that God gave him his Master's House, and his Master's Wives into his Bosom, 2 Sam. xii. 8; but the Text does not say, that *David* took *Saul's* Wives to be his Wives, nor are we obliged to understand by it any more than this, that they came into his Possession with the rest of his Substance; which shews the high State to which Providence had raised him, and this was all that the Prophet intended to shew. Nor are we to think otherwise of Divorce: For though the Law in *Deuteronomy*, Chap. xxiv. ver. 1. *When a Man hath taken a Wife—and she find no Favour in his Eyes—let him write her a Bill of Divorcement, &c.* though, I say, this Law carries with it the Style of a Precept, yet our Saviour treats it as if we read of but one Wife that *Saul* had, *Abigail*, the Daughter of *Abimaaz*, 1 Sam. xiv. 50. And yet this Passage seems to import that he had several.

the

the putting away a Man's Wife, as a Matter of Sufferance only, and not as a Matter of Command; and rightly. For the Law refers to the Practice as already subsisting, and (not defining whether it was right or wrong) only provides, that in case any Person should put away his Wife, he should do it in the Manner here directed. It is to be confessed, that he who gives a Law to regulate any Practice, must be understood, in the gross, as consenting to that Practice; and this, no doubt, is what our Saviour meant, when he told the Jews, that Moses suffered them to put away their Wives. There is a Sense in which God suffers Things directly criminal, as when he does not punish for them, or when he does not give the Authors of them any special Call to Repentance; in which Sense Paul and Barnabas are to be understood, when they say, that God suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways, Acts xiv. 16. God cannot consent that Men should be wicked; and therefore this was only a Sufferance of Connivance, as St. Paul calls it, Acts xvii. 30. *The Times of this Ignorance*

† See Levit. xxi. 14. xxii. 13. and Numb. xxx. 9.

God

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God WINKED at. But the prescribing to the *Jews* the Manner how they should put away their Wives (of which we find no Instance in any Cases simply unlawful) shews, I say, that the Sufferance in this Case was a Sufferance of Consent. But Consent does not always imply Approbation. A Father may consent that his Son should do many Things that he does not like, lest, if he should refuse, he might do something bad; and this was the Case here. *Moses* FOR THE HARDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS suffered them to put away their Wives.

If it should be alledged, that the great Distinction with which God treated *Abraham* and his Family, shews that he approved their Behaviour in having several Wives at once; the Consequence will go a great deal too far. For it will as well shew that he approved their Behaviour in other Respects, in which yet, it is certain, he neither did nor could approve it. Will you say that God approves Diffimulation, because both *Abraham* and *Isaac* practised it with *Abimelech*? Or is Fraud and Falshood therefore

right, because *Jacob* practised it in obtaining the Blessing from his Brother *Esau*? But the Truth in these Cases is, that as the Distinction paid to *Abraham* and his Family was not merely for their own Sakes, but to serve some great and general Ends of God's Providence, which they might have been, and were, qualified to serve, though liable to many personal Failings; God was not obliged, in consequence of this Distinction, to take any special Notice of such personal Failings, or to call them to a Reformation, farther than as other Reasons of Providence made it proper for him so to do; which Reasons are not fixed and unchangeable, as the moral Precepts are, but subject to Variation, as the State and Circumstances of the World vary. Now, if this is true in Things morally bad, it is much more so in Things of a middle Nature, *i. e.* not strictly right, but tolerable; and this must be said, that though (the original Intention of Marriage considered) Polygamy was an Abuse, yet it was more tolerable in those Days than it would be now, and there might (incidentally) have been a Convenience in suffering it. We  
see



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see from the Scripture History, that the World was very thinly inhabited in *Abraham's* Time. For when he came first into the Land of *Canaan*, and dwelt there as a Stranger, we find none of the old Inhabitants of that Country, challenging him as having invaded their Property; and when his Brother *Lot* and he had lived so long near each other, that there began to be a Want of Room, and a Contention arose between their Herdsmen, *Abraham* proposed a Separation, and said to his Brother, *Is not the whole Land before thee? If thou wilt take the left Hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right Hand then I will go to the left*, Gen. xiii. 9. And as the World was then unacquainted with those Arts of Living which Luxury has since introduced, and Men subsisted only by Husbandry and feeding Cattle, they might with great Ease to themselves, and with no Inconvenience to their Neighbours, maintain large Families. There can be no doubt but that the Indulgence of Polygamy very much contributed to the speedy Execution of that Promise made to *Abraham*, that he should be the Father of many Nations,

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Nations; and that his Posterity should come back again to inherit the Land wherein he was then but a Sojourner. *Jacob* went down into *Egypt*, with his Sons by all his Wives, which were a large Family; and when they had the Land of *Goshen* assigned them for their Dwelling (where, it may be presumed, the same Liberty was taken) when the Time appointed drew near, their great Increase opened the Way to their Deliverance. But whatever were the Reasons why this Practice was permitted in those Days (with which perhaps we are not perfectly well acquainted) they make no Change in the Nature of it as right or wrong, but leave it just as they find it.

The Result then is this; that Polygamy and Divorce, not being simply and absolutely unlawful, God might allow them, for a Time; and yet, the married State under these Circumstances falling short of that Perfection which Providence intended from its first Institution, he might, when it should become seasonable, again restrain them. And it would indeed be very  
strange

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 strange if we should deny that Power to  
 the supreme Legislator, which every State  
 or Kingdom exerciseth by civil Authority.  
 The *Roman* Laws did not allow of more  
 Wives than one; nor the *Grecian*<sup>c</sup>, ordi-  
 narily at least. No doubt because it was  
 found inconvenient to Society, for Men to  
 have a Multiplicity of Wives. And certain-  
 it is, that Inconveniences there are. For,  
 besides that the Affairs of private Families  
 will be best carried on, when the Wife,  
 bestowing herself entirely on the Husband,  
 receives the equal Return of his whole  
 Heart and Affection, the Allowance of Po-  
 lygamy (as a very great Writer observes)  
 will in Time have this Consequence, that  
 “ the nobler Families will (by too great a  
 “ Number of Children) be reduced to Po-  
 “ verty; the meaner to Beggary; and the  
 “ State oppressed with an idle Swarm of  
 “ the baser Populacy<sup>d</sup>.” This Reasoning  
 supposes, that the Practice of Polygamy  
 contributes to the Multiplication of the  
 Species, more than single Marriages; and  
 unquestionably it does, upon Supposition

<sup>c</sup> See *Puffendorff De Jur. N. & G. Lib. vi. c. 1.*  
 § 14.

<sup>d</sup> *Id. ibid.* § 19.

that

that there are Women enough to supply each Man with several Wives. But whether there is that Disproportion between the Number of each Sex, ordinarily born into the World, as will support this Practice in Perpetuity, may justly be made a Question; and if there is not, Civil Government will find it necessary to restrain it somewhere, lest it run into Intercommunity; of all Evils, in this kind, the most intolerable.

In respect of Divorce, it will be necessary to consider, how far it is restrained by the Law of Christ. By the Question which the Pharisee put to our Saviour, *Matt. xix. 3.* it should seem, that it was customary at that Time, among the Jews, for Men to put away their Wives by arbitrary Will and Pleasure; for they ask, *Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for EVERY CAUSE?* It is very natural to suppose, that this Question was raised upon the Law of Moses; *Deut. xxiv. 1.* which (says \* Selden) the Jewish Doctors inter-

\* See *Uxor Hab.* Lib. iii. cap. 22, 23. & *Puffend.*  
*Ibid.*



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preted variously ; some holding that a Man  
ought not to put away his Wife, unless  
upon some Discovery of Baseness or Tur-  
pitude ; whilst others maintained, that any  
Dislike taken against the Woman, was e-  
nough to justify a Divorce. And it is to be  
confessed, that the Law leaves Handle e-  
nough for such Disputes ; for thus it runs,  
*When a Man hath taken a Wife and mar-  
ried her, and it come to pass that she find no  
Favour in his Eyes, because he hath found  
some Uncleaness in her, then let him write  
her a Bill of Divorcement, &c.* The Law,  
you see, appoints no Judge between Man  
and Wife, but leaves every Man to his own  
Discretion ; and it not being distinctly spe-  
cified of what Sort this Uncleaness should  
be, here was room left for every one to put  
away his Wife who had no Mind to keep  
her. Let us now attend to our Saviour's  
Answer, *Have ye not read, that he which  
made them at the Beginning made them  
Male and Female ? &c.*—*What therefore  
God hath joined together let not Man put a-  
sunder.* In which Answer it is evident,  
that without entering at all into the Que-  
stion, in what Cases the Law of Moses did

or

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or did not allow of Divorce, our Saviour impeaches the Law itself; and so the Jews understood him, as appears by their Answer: *Why did Moses then command to give a Writing of Divorcement?* Which is as if they had said,—“You seem to say, that Divorce is in no case allowable: But why then did Moses allow it?” Our Saviour answers, *Moses, because of the Hardness of your Hearts, suffered you to put away your Wives, but from the Beginning it was not so.* Here our Saviour again impeaches the Law, and in effect declares, that *Moses*, for the Hardness of their Hearts, allowed a Liberty in this Case which was not agreeable to the original Institution of Marriage, to which original Institution it was his Intention to recall them; and then he goes on to shew, in what Cases He allowed those who would be his Disciples, to put away their Wives; *And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication, &c.* In which Words he corrects the Generality of his first Answer, and shews them that it was not to be understood without  
L Exception,

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Exception, and yet with such Exception, as would still leave a considerable Distinction between his Law and the Law of *Moses*. This will be farther evident from what is said upon the same Subject, Chap. v. ver. 31. *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement; BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, That whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving for the Cause of Fornication, &c.* Here our Saviour places his own Law, and the Law of *Moses*, in the way of Opposition to each other; and the necessary Construction is, that the one allowed a Liberty in the Matter of Divorce, which the other alloweth not.

Let us now consider where the Distinction lies. And if you understand *the Cause of Fornication* in our Saviour's Law, to mean Unfaithfulness to the Marriage Bed, it will be very plain. For undoubtedly the Law of *Moses* allowed of Divorce in Causes of an inferior Nature. The Words are—*If she find NO FAVOUR in his eyes, because he hath found some UNCLEANNESS in her;* which



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which describes some Cause of Dislike on the Part of the Wife, not a Violation of the Marriage Contract; which, had it been the Thing intended, would have been expressed in much stronger Terms. And it should be remembered, that by the Law of *Moses* Adultery was punished by Death, and therefore stands excluded from the Causes of Divorce. By the natural Law, Adultery is a justifiable Cause of Separation; and *Christ* in his Answer shews, that what the natural Law directs to in such Circumstances, he had no Intention to controul. But then it must farther be observed, that as our Saviour refers himself to the original Institution of Marriage, for his Determination upon the Matter of Divorce, it must by equitable Construction be understood, that in excepting the Case of Adultery, he has, virtually, excepted all Cases that stand within the same Reason; that is, all in which there are Impediments that will not consist with the first and principal End of Marriage. But if you carry your Exceptions farther, and interpret the Cause of Fornication, so as to include every kind of ill Behaviour which may give just Cause



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of Offence (as Mr. Selden<sup>f</sup> seems to have done) you will indeed leave little room for Unbelievers to object against the Severity of *Christ's* Law ; but then you will find it hard to support the Distinction between the Law of *Christ* and the Law of *Moses*. For if the Law of *Christ* allows of Divorce for every Cause of Offence, the Law of *Moses* could do no more, and so *Christ* and *Moses* will be agreed ; which is contrary to the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Discourse upon this Subject.

Taking the thing then in this Light (in which, I think, I have the best Authorities to support me) viz. That whereas the Law of *Moses*, and of all other Nations, allowed Men the Liberty to put away their Wives, for *lower Causes* of Dislike, *Jesus Christ* forbids his Followers to put away their Wives, except in the Causes which cross the first and principal Intention of Marriage ; Where, I ask, is the Fault ? Will you say that it is not better for Man and Wife to correct those lesser Faults in themselves, which make them disagreeable

<sup>f</sup> Ibid.

to each other, than to dissolve the matrimonial Bond? An Adulteress, by the very Act, for ever forfeits all Right to her Husband's Confidence, without which one great End of Marriage, which is the ascertaining the Husband's Property in the Offspring, is destroyed; and there may be Impediments of other kinds; which in the Nature of things are not corrigible. But every Person, that will take the pains for it, may bridle those Passions which lead to Offences of an inferior kind; which will preserve those Blessings to the married State, that Providence originally intended, and mend the whole moral Character. There are indeed supposable States of the World, when this is not ordinarily to be expected, and in that Case Wisdom will direct to abate something in the Rigour of one Law (in the Nature of it dispensable) to preserve due Reverence to others of equal, or of greater Importance; and our Saviour intimates, as has afore been observed, that this was the Case under the Legal Dispensation, and the Reason why *Moses* suffered them to put away their Wives. God himself, no doubt, best knows to what State of things,

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what sort of Discipline is best suited, and therefore it would be absurd to dispute with our Saviour the Truth of his Observation. But if it was ever proper to call Men to Order in these Points, surely it was under that Dispensation, whose End is to bring in universal Righteousness; to clear the natural Law from those Corruptions which Ignorance had introduced, and to advance it to its original Perfection. And HE surely had full Right to be the Minister of such a Reformation, who came with Motives to enforce, and with Assistances to support the Obedience of his Law, far superior to all other Teachers or Lawgivers that had gone before him. It is, I confess, but too visible from common Observation, that this Restraint of the Liberty of Divorce as ill agrees with the Spirit of some Christians, as it did with the Spirit of the *Jews* or Heathens. But let such blame, not the Law, but themselves. The Law shews them their true Interest if they will follow it; if they will not, it is more reasonable that they should bear the ill Consequences of it themselves, than that the Hands of Providence should be for ever tied up from offering

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offering such Regulations as are useful in  
respect of the general good, to serve which,  
if Mankind will act reasonably, this Re-  
straint is unquestionably calculated. It  
may bear hard in some particular Instances,  
as, more or less, all good Laws do and will.  
But these Evils are better borne, than a Re-  
medy attempted, by indulging a Liberty  
that can never be generally wanted, but in  
Times of general Corruption, and which,  
in Concert with other Species's of Licen-  
tiousness, will help to hasten the Ruin of  
Families and of Kingdoms. A great Wri-  
ter before quoted says, that "one may  
"reckon among the chief Causes of the  
"Decay and Corruption of the *Roman*  
"State, their too frequent Practice of Di-  
"vorses, either upon slight Pretences or  
"none at all; which was so great, that, as  
"Seneca reports, many Ladies of Emi-  
"nence and Quality reckoned their Years,  
"not by the Number of Consuls, but of  
"their Husbands, and were divorced in  
"hopes of marrying, and married in hopes  
"of being divorced<sup>b</sup>." And how near  
an Alliance a Reserve in this Point has  
with the national Virtue, may be seen from

<sup>b</sup> *Puffend.* *ibid.* § 21.



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what the same and other Writers have observed, *viz.* That though the *Roman* Laws did not forbid Divorce, History affords no Instance of the Practice of it, till above five hundred Years after the building of the City.

I have not thought it needful to be very particular in setting forth the Inconveniencies either of Polygamy or Divorce, which are to be met with in almost every Writer upon this Subject; and which indeed every one's own Thoughts will readily suggest to him: And let it always be remembered, in considering these Points, that these Inconveniencies essentially adhere to the States themselves, and do not arise from ill Conduct in the Parties concerned, as the Inconveniencies on the other side ordinarily do; which makes a very considerable Difference in the two Cases. But I judged it very necessary to be distinct upon these Subjects, being sensible that great Prejudices against the Gospel have arisen from the seeming Severity of this Branch of *Christ's* Law; and an unreasonable Severity (possibly) it will appear to many, if it be considered as founded *merely* on the Authority of *Christ*. For though it cannot be doubted but that  
God

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God hath Authority to restrain the natural Rights of Men if he sees so fit, and actually hath done so in lesser Matters, the better to secure the Obedience of the moral Law in greater Instances, as will be hereafter shewn; yet I conceive it would be no easy Matter to shew a Reason why he should oblige a Man to keep a Wife whom he does not like, if in the Nature of the thing it was just as right to put her away; or why he should confine him to one Wife, if it made no Difference as to the Natural Law whether he has one or many. I have therefore endeavoured to shew, that these Laws concerning *Polygamy* and *Divorce* have a much higher Original, and are indeed the Natural Law itself in its *Perfection*; which is placing these Laws upon the very Foundation upon which *Christ* himself has placed them, who does not refer them to his own *sole* Authority, but to the *original* Institution of Marriage.—FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO.

It is now time that we proceed to some Matters of another kind: And the next Branch of our Saviour's Law that will pro-

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perly fall under our Consideration, is that which concerns our Conduct in reference to those who offer Injury to us, and from whom we have received Injury. In respect of the first, our Saviour lays down this Rule: *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any Man will sue thee at the Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also.* Matt. v. 38—40. In respect of the second, this; *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy. But I say unto you, Love your Enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;* ver. 43, 44. These are looked upon as *hard Sayings*, by the angry and revengeful, as the Laws concerning Marriage are, by the voluptuous and intemperate. But I shall prove, that neither in these Points has *Christ* advanced any thing as of general Obligation, but what the natural Law contains.

To

To begin with the first, *Resist not Evil*, &c. It will be necessary, in order to come at the true Meaning of it, to consider the Nature of the Law to which it stands opposed; which is that Law commonly called the *Lex talionis*, or Law of *Retaliation* appointed by *Moses*, of which we find mention *Deut. xix. 16—21.* and in several other Places. *If a false Witness rise up against any Man, to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the Men between whom the Controversy is shall stand before the Lord, before the Priests and the Judges— and if the Witness be a false Witness—then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his Brother—Life shall go for Life, Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth, Hand for Hand, Foot for Foot.* We are to observe, that this Law gave no Permission to private Revenge; for the Matter was to be brought before the Judges, who were to give Sentence as they should find Cause. For this Reason the Law of *Christ*, not to resist *Evil* (which here stands in Opposition to what *Moses* appointed) can have nothing to do with private Revenge; but must relate

to



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to Punishment obtained by legal Methods.  
There would have been no sort of Propriety  
in saying, "*Moses* appointed Offenders to  
"be so or so punished by the Sentence of  
"the Law; but I say unto you, let no  
"Man cause another to suffer for Injury  
"committed, without the Sentence of the  
"Law." This advances nothing: For  
the Law of *Moses* admitted not of private  
Methods of Retaliation, any more than the  
Law of *Christ*. But the Answer will come  
with great Appositeness and Force, if you  
will suppose our Saviour to have spoken to  
this Effect; "I know that by *Moses's* Law  
"you may demand an Eye for an Eye, and  
"a Tooth for a Tooth. But I say unto  
"you, decline all Methods of Retaliation,  
"patiently suffer whatever Indignities or  
"Wrongs ye may suffer for my Sake; nor  
"seek Redress from human Tribunals."  
With this Interpretation, what follows per-  
fectly well agrees. *Whosoever shall smite*  
*thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other*  
*also. And if any Man will sue thee at the*  
*Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have*  
*thy Cloak also. And whosoever shall compel*  
*thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.*  
These

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These Expressions import a perfect *Passiveness* under every kind of ill Treatment; and there are other Directions in Scripture which come up to the same Meaning. *Behold I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves; be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves, Matt. x. 16.* And ver. 23, *When they persecute you in this City, flee ye into another.* They were to take all prudent Precaution to avoid Mischief; but if it overtook them, they had nothing else to do but to *flee* from it. They were not to *resist*; they were not to *impeach* in Courts of Justice.

These two last Directions, I confess, make part of a Discourse which *Christ* is said to have spoken to his twelve Apostles, when he sent them forth to preach; whereas the Law now in Question, was given to *all* his Disciples. But this Circumstance, I think, will make no material Difference in the Argument. For the whole Number of *Christ's* Disciples was then but small; and (probably) most of them such as were afterwards to be sent forth to preach the Gospel; and there will be nothing forced and  
I unnatural

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unnatural in supposing that our Saviour's Discourse might (in some parts of it) have a special Relation to their Conduct, considered in the Capacity of such as were to be the Instruments of propagating the Gospel throughout the World; which common Sense would easily distinguish from those Precepts which were of *universal and perpetual* Obligation, when the Reasons upon which the Speciality was grounded, should be at an End. And it may farther be very justly said, that the Case of all the first Christians was alike in this Respect. They were ALL to be the Examples of patient Suffering, and restrained from having Recourse to the common Methods of Redress, that the Power of God might be the more visible in their Preservation. *When ye shall be brought before Kings and Rulers for my Name's Sake—settle it in your Hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer. For I will give you a Mouth and Wisdom,* Luke xxi. 12. I; that is, I, by my extraordinary Power and Presence with you, will give, &c. And this, they are told, was to be for a Testimony, Matt. x. 18. Luke xxi. 13. And as they were to depend upon  
God's

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God's extraordinary Providence for Protection against the Malice of Men ; so they were also (without any Forecast of their own) to depend upon it for the common Necessaries of Life. *Provide neither Gold nor Silver nor Brasse in your Purses, nor Scrip for your Journey, neither two Coats, neither Shoes, nor yet Staves,* Matt. x. 9. Grotius hath rightly observed, that when they are forbidden to carry *Staves*, the Meaning is, that they should have no more *Staves* than what they carried in their Hands for the Conveniency of Travelling ; just as when they are forbidden to carry *Shoes*, the Meaning is, that they should carry no more than they had on their Feet ; for it is not to be supposed that they travelled bare-foot. Accordingly, in the Account which *St. Mark* gives of this Matter, our Saviour allows each of them a *Staff*, but nothing else. *Take nothing for your Journey, save a Staff only,* Chap. vi. ver. 8. But Weapons of Defence they were to have none ; Gold or Silver they were to have none ; Bread or Change of Garments they were not to have. In all Instances in which any of these Things could be useful or necessary, they were to rely



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rely upon God only to provide for them, as in his Wisdom it should seem most expedient.

This meek, *passive* Spirit, in bearing Injuries, was one of the grand Characteristics of the Messiah, as foretold by the Prophets. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his Voice to be heard in the Street, Isai. xlii. 2. I gave my Back to the Smilers, and my Cheeks to them that plucked off the Hair, Chap. l. 6. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth. He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before his Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth, Chap. liii. 7.* Our Saviour's whole Life answers to this Description. In all his Sufferings he was perfectly passive, and rebuked his Disciples when they would have had Recourse to violent Methods of Defence, *Matt. xxvi. 52.* And how congruous was it, that those who under the Power of his own Spirit were sent forth to finish the Work which he had begun, should be enjoined the same Behaviour? They were enjoined it; nor in vain. They suffered Indignities of  
of

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of all kinds; but where do we ever read of their striving, or fighting, or impleading in Courts of Justice? *Christ* told them, that they should be brought before Governors and Kings for his Sake. This they could not help; but they were to bring no Man thither; nor do we find they ever did. For though St. Paul appealed to *Cæsar's Judgment Seat*; it was not till after he had been apprehended of the Jews, and brought before *Festus* the Roman Governor, who to do the Jews a Pleasure, asked him, *Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these Things?* Acts xxv. 9. The Jews were his Accusers; he was not their Accuser. Judged he must be somewhere, which he refuseth not, but appeals to the proper Judge.

Taking then the Law in Question to have a *special* Respect to the State of Christianity, when the Gospel was first to be published to the World, and when the *miraculous* Power of God, in the Preservation of its first Professors, was to stand as one part of the *Evidence* of its divine Authority; Placing (I say) the Law in this Light, it will, in the very

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Letter

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Letter of it, stand clear of all reasonable Exception. For where is the Fault, that *Christ* should restrain those from using the common legal Methods of Defence, whom he had taken under his own extraordinary Care and Protection? Here was, it is true, a Restraint upon natural Liberty; but they had more than an Equivalent for it. But if you will suppose this Precept to be a Law which concerns all Christians, there will then be a Necessity of understanding it with due Qualifications; not as absolutely forbidding the Use of legal Remedies in case of Injuries, but as restraining that Liberty within certain Bounds, as Reason and good Sense, directed by Justice and Charity, shall require; that is (in other Words) the Law of *Christ* must receive its Interpretation from the natural Law, and consequently will be one and the same with it. The Reason is, because an absolute Prohibition of legal Remedies, in effect, supersedes the Magistrate's Office, and destroys the Rights of Civil Society, which we are very sure it was not our Saviour's Intention to do. *Render unto Cæsar the Things which are Cæsar's*, was his Maxim. To pay Tribute when demanded, was his Practice;

which is a virtual Acknowledgment of the Rights of Civil Society. And when a certain Man said to him, *Master, speak to my Brother, that he divide the Inheritance with me*; his Answer was, *Who made ME a Judge or Divider over you?* Luke xii. 13, 14. Which Answer admits, that there were proper Judges in such Cases somewhere, and denies only that his Office extended to any such Matters. His Apostle, St. Paul, is full and strong in this Point, as you may see at large, *Rom. xiii. 1—7.* and *Tit. iii. 1.* And St. Peter, *1 Ep. ii. 13, 14.* *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake; whether it be to the King as supreme; or unto Governors as unto them that are sent by him, for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.* But though all this implies, that Appeals to the Magistrate are lawful and fit, upon a general View of the Case, yet Circumstances may make it improper in particular Cases. We have seen the Reason (if the Interpretation I have given be admitted) why our Saviour forbid his Apostles making such Appeals against their Persecutors; and for like Reasons we find St. Paul blaming the *Corinthians*, for



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haling each other before Heathen Tribunals, in Disputes between themselves. What is *lawful* may not always be *expedient*. This is as true now in Multitudes of Cases as it was then. But it is to be observed, that when Prudence interposes to prevent Appeals to the Magistrate, it is not *Christ*, or his Law, that restrains Natural Right, but it is the Natural Law itself that suspends its own Execution.

Let us go on then to the second Branch of our Saviour's Rule. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy. But I say unto you, Love your Enemies ; blefs them that curse you ; do good to them that hate you ; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.* It is to be remarked, that the Opposition here lies not between *Moses* and *Christ*, but between *Christ* and the corrupt Interpreters of *Moses*. *Moses* said *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour.* But *Moses* never said, *Thou shalt hate thine Enemy* ; as the following Passages fully prove, *Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any Grudge against the Children of thy People, but thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself—And if a*  
*Stranger*

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*Stranger sojourn with thee in your Land, ye shall not vex him; but the Stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, Levit. xix. 18. 33. 34. Again, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. If thou meet thine Enemy's Ox or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his Burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him. With all which that Precept of the wise Man well agrees, If thine Enemy be hungry, give him Bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him Water to drink, Prov. xxv. 21. We see hence, that there is one and the same Spirit in the Law of Moses and in the Law of Christ, and both are but the Transcript of the original Law of Nature. To hate any Person implies a Disposition to do him Mischief, and to repay one bad Turn by another; which is a Breach of the natural Law. Some of the heathen Philosophers justified Revenge; but one of the wisest of them hath said, ἡ δὲ, ὅδ' ἀδίκημα καὶ ἀνταδικεῖν; "It is not lawful even for him that is ill treated to treat another ill." And*

*Socrates, in Plat. Critone.*

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Reason is clearly on his Side. For though the Law of Nature allows of Self-Defence, and every Wrong done, naturally calls for Punishment to be inflicted upon the Transgressor; yet to avoid those obvious and manifold Inconveniences that would arise, if every Man was left to judge for himself in such Cases, and to proportion the Retaliation to the Sense which *he* has of the Wrong done, Nature directs to SOCIETY; and the very Moment a Man becomes a Member of Society, he must be understood as having divested himself of his natural Right in these Cases, and as having placed it in the Hands of the Magistrate as the common Umpire. Upon this Principle (excepting only Cases of immediate Necessity, where the Laws of Society cannot interpose for Protection, and which the Gospel leaves as it finds them) all private Repulsion of Force by Force, and every private Method by which Men are afflicted or punished, merely on the Score of wrong doing, is a manifest Invasion of the Magistrate's Office, and, so far as it goes, a Defiance of the Rights of Society. Every Deviation from the Gospel Rule in this Matter



Matter falls within the same Conclusion. For take it in our Saviour's own Words, *Love your Enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you:* Or take it as St. Paul states it, *Rom. xii. 20. If thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him Drink;* the Amount will be the same. To love, to pray, and to bless; to give Meat to the hungry, and Drink to the thirsty, are Acts of Benevolence naturally due to all Men in common; and if I refuse to discharge this common Debt, because I have received an Injury, is it not clear that I take upon me to exercise that Right of judging and punishing that Injury, which, as a Member of Society, I must be understood to have disclaimed? It is not so when I only refuse to treat a Person who has done me wrong with special Confidence and Friendship; for this is not with-holding a common Debt, nor do I take upon me to judge the Offence, or to punish the Offender merely on the Score of wrong doing; but judging of the Man by the Offence, I with-hold a Trust, in the Disposal of which I am naturally



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turally free, and for which the Offence  
shews him to be unqualified. It is very  
necessary to distinguish these two Cases, be-  
cause the Gospel Law has much to do with  
the one, and nothing at all with the other.  
For Benevolence and Charity may be ex-  
ercised towards those with whom no  
Friendship can subsist. This is all that the  
Gospel obliges to, and this Nature itself  
teaches, and powerfully excites to. There-  
fore we may observe, that this Precept, to  
love our Enemies, is not enforced by any  
Considerations in which the Authority of  
Christ is specially concerned, but left to  
rest, both by our Saviour and St. Paul, upon  
its own natural Foundation. The first  
reasons upon a Principle of natural Equity,  
when he says, *That ye may be the Children  
of your Father which is in Heaven; for he  
maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the  
Good, &c.* the latter, upon a Principle of  
natural Utility, when he says, *For in so  
doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire on his  
Head.*

I have now gone through every thing  
to which I have thought fit to add.  
If it should be objected to that Precept  
of our Saviour, *Thou shalt love thy Neigh-  
bour*

born AS THEMSELVES, that it is impracticable; the Answer is, that this Law was originally the Law of Moses, from whom our Saviour cites it; and there can be no question but each of these Legislators had one and the same Meaning, viz. Not that we should love our Neighbour with the same *Solicitude of Passion* wherewith we love ourselves, which is indeed impossible; but, that we should behave towards him with the same *Integrity of Conduct*, which is both possible and reasonable. To love our Neighbour as ourselves, is to act as if we had the same *Tenderness of Concern* for him as we have for ourselves; and this Precept will be fulfilled in the most complete and perfect Sense, when we observe that golden Rule of Christ, which, in respect of that Duty which we owe to our Neighbour, is the Sum and Substance of the *natural Law*. *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

I have now gone through every thing that may seem exceptionable in the Law of Christ; for as to all other Laws in which  
the

the Government of our Passions are concerned, they are plainly nothing more than what the Law of Nature teaches. You will find no other Rule as to eating or drinking, or the Use of any natural Passion, than what you will find in *Aristotle* or *Cicero*, or any other good moral Writer; for as to that kind of *Abstinence* which we properly term *religious*, separate from it the Abuses of Superstition (with which the Gospel is nothing concerned) and it will appear to be nothing more than a *prudential* Oeconomy in the Use of those things that relate to the Body, serving to assist the Mind in its more noble Operations, and to guard it against the Inroads of those gross and sensual Affections which are wont to draw us aside from those Pursuits which are proper to us as reasonable Creatures. It should be observed, that *Christ* was not the Author of this Sort of Discipline. He only approved what good Men had anciently practised, not by any *divine Appointment*, that we read of, but, most probably, led to it by its Congruity to Nature, and the Experience of its Usefulness to preserve to the Mind its proper State and Temper. It is *thus far* therefore,

fore, and thus far *only*, that we are to consider it as the Law of *Christ*; and thus far it is as clearly *Nature's* Law, as it is *his*.

By this Time then, I hope, we have fully secured our general Point, that, in respect of the Government of our Passions, the Gospel lays no greater Burden upon us, than what the Law of Nature imposes; and that therefore if this is a Reason why we should reject the Gospel, it is as good a Reason why we should lay aside Natural Religion too, and turn mere Atheists. This, I am afraid, is too frequently the Case. When Men led away by strong Passions, grow impatient of the Restraints of Religion, and to ease themselves, as they hope, renounce Christianity; they very quickly find, that there is no Safety for them so long as there is a *God* left to judge and punish them, and so the next Step is to deny his Being or his Providence, or both. My Business at present lies not directly with *Atheists*; and yet because I would do full Justice to this *Prejudice*, that the Law of *Christ* is hard and severe, and shame it (if it were possible) out of all Countenance, I will go yet one  
Step



Step farther, and shew, that if they should be disposed to take refuge in the last wretched Resort, it would not serve their Turn. What sensual Men would have, is, I suppose, a full, unrestrained Indulgence of sensual Appetite. But whether a Man hath Religion, or whether he hath none; in the Nature of things this cannot be. For setting aside all those Cases (which are very many) where the Means of gratifying our Appetites are not in our Power; there are a Variety of Restraints, which, View being had to the Happiness of this Life only, mere human Prudence will lay us under. As for Instance;

1. The Law of *Self-Preservation* will direct us not to indulge our Appetites beyond our natural Strength; for this will both shorten and embitter Life, and the painful Consequences will more than balance the Pleasures. In this respect we differ from the Brutes. *They* have Strength equal to the Extent of Appetite; *we* have not. A Man may kill a Beast by unskilful Management; but turn him loose to the common Products of the Earth, and he will  
not

not die with surfeiting. The natural Powers of every Creature are wisely adjusted to their natural Wants. Beasts want not Reason to restrain Appetite, and therefore they have it not. But Man has Reason; and in no Instance is there greater Use of it than in setting Bounds to Appetite, which does not end (as in Brutes) where his natural Wants end, but urges on, and, if indulged in all its Cravings, will hasten him with Speed to his own Destruction.

2. The Indulgence of Appetite supposeth the natural Means; as Meat, when we are hungry; Drink, when we are thirsty; and the like: Which Means, Providence hath not provided for all in equal Proportion, but distributed in various Measure; to some much, and to others little. This therefore introduces a Necessity of Management and Contrivance, so to adjust our Expences to our Circumstances, that our Stock may hold out for the Time we shall probably want it; and that we may not (as a very excellent Writer expresses it) "sacrifice a great Sum to a small; Years to Months or Days; and the Entertainment

ment of our whole Life, to the Rage of  
 "a very small Part of it." What does a  
 Man gain by rioting in Youth, to lay up  
 for himself a starving, or a wretched old  
 Age? Is it reasonable, in order to avoid a  
 lower kind of Restraint, to draw upon  
 yourself that Necessity which will force  
 you to submit to a greater, whether you  
 will or no? True it is, that when the  
 Comforts of Life are gone, there will al-  
 ways be one Remedy left, which is to put  
 an End to a miserable Being; and it is a  
 Remedy which many make use of. But is  
 there nothing lost by this? Yes; unless  
 you will say, that if you may not indulge  
 beyond the Bounds of Reason, what you  
 may indulge within those Bounds is not  
 worth owning; which to assert were gross  
 Folly.

3. There is yet one Rule of Prudence  
 more not to be omitted, which is, that no  
 Man should indulge sensual Appetite to an-  
 other Man's Wrong. If you have Appe-  
 tites, others have them as well as you;  
 and what prompts one to injure, will

<sup>a</sup> Bp. *Weston*, Sermon, Vol. I, p. 416.

prompt

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prompt the injured Person to defend, or to repay. Should all Men set out with a Resolution to lay their Hands upon every thing they could come at, which would serve as an Instrument to gratify Appetite, it would introduce a State of War, in which the Weak would become a Prey to the Strong; the Consequence of which would be, the Destruction of the whole Race. This Mischief is prevented by the Laws of Civil Society, which are plainly a Restraint upon Appetite, and confessed to be a just and a necessary one, by all the World.

These Considerations abundantly shew, that the Necessity of *Self-Denial* is not created by Religion, but founded in the Nature and Constitution of Things. So that if these Objectors will say, that *Providence* has dealt hardly by them, they must say, that their *Fate*, or their *Chance*, (or by what other Name soever they shall think fit to describe that Power which brought this universal System together) has dealt hardly by them too; and a new World must be made to please them. For as things stand, they *must* refrain in a great many Instances,



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Instances, or it will go very badly with them; and if they would fairly balance their Gains and their Losses by vicious Indulgences, and when they have done all that in common Prudence is necessary to be done for their own Sakes (Regard being had to Health, to their Circumstances, and the *Laws* of Civil Society) would sit down and consider, how little there will remain to be done for God's Sake, perhaps they would be better reconciled to Religion, and not think it worth the while to hazard an *Eternity* for such a Trifle.

Thus far then we have gone in preparing the Way to the grand Question that is to follow, concerning the Equity of the *Sanction* of *Christ's* Law, viz. to have shewn that the *Law* in itself is equitable, laying no greater Restraint upon us than what the natural Law subjects us to, nor more than in many Cases we shall find ourselves obliged to lay upon ourselves, whether we have Religion or whether we have none. This Point goes no farther than to the *Matter* of the Law. But Laws (as I have observed) may be considered as to the  
Circum-

*Circumstances* under which they are given, which, to make such Laws truly equitable, ought to be adjusted by Wisdom and Goodness. To explain my Meaning: A Law will be more or less equitable, as the *Encouragement* which it offers to influence the Obedience of the Subject, or the *Helps*, and *Assistances* it administers, to guard against Transgressions (View being had to the Strength or Weakness of those upon whom it is imposed) are greater or less. And that the Provisions made by the Gospel in these respects are amply sufficient, St. Peter seems to intimate to us, in his second Epistle, Chap. i. § 3, 4. where he says, that God hath given us all things that pertain to Life and Godliness, through the Knowledge of him that hath called us to Glory and Virtue. Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these we might be Partakers of the divine Nature, having escaped the Corruption that is in the World through Lust. God calls us to Virtue by the Gospel, but he calls us likewise to Glory as the Reward of Virtue. He calls us from the Corruption that is in the World through Lust, to be Partakers of the divine

N Nature;

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Nature; but he has given to us exceeding great and precious Promises, to strengthen and support us in this difficult Work. And these are the things we are now to consider.

*Of the Equity  
of the Law of  
Christ, in re-  
spect of the  
Reward it pro-  
poses.*

And, in the first place, as to the REWARD, it has been laid down from the Beginning, that the Gospel is itself the Charter of ETERNAL LIFE to them that obey it; and no Man can pretend to object, that this is not a sufficient Encouragement. For though the Law of Christ obliges us to renounce this World, and to follow Him, if Need requires, through Afflictions and Persecutions, and even unto Death itself; yet, under the very worst Circumstances that can be put, St. Paul's Reckoning will be right, *That the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us.* Because our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 17. If the Life to come comprehends an Eternity of Happiness, it will repay all  
our

our Sufferings in this short and momentary State with infinite Advantage; And this should help to reconcile us to the Severity of the Gospel Sanction, that the Reward is also proportionable.

But the Objection here is, not that the Gospel does too little, but that it does too much. Some Unbelievers will tell us, that Virtue must be a *disinterested* Thing; and that to obey God in view of Benefit or Advantage to ourselves, is mean and selfish. This Notion (you will observe) places the Gospel under the absurd Light of destroying, by the means which it appointeth, the very End which it proposeth; for that the Rewards of a future State are set before us as a Motive to well-doing, is too plain from Scripture to admit of a Dispute. The Words of St. Peter, just now recited, are Evidence to this Point. For he places our being *called to Glory* in the Rank of a Means to Virtue; and says, that God hath given us *great and precious Promises* THAT BY THESE (*i. e.* that by the Force and Influence of these) we might escape the Corruptions of the World, &c. But



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St. Paul is clear and express, *Tit. ii. 13.*  
where, after having set forth, that the End  
of *Christ's* coming was to *teach us to deny*  
*Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live so-*  
*berly, righteously, and godly, in this present*  
*World,* he immediately subjoins, *LOOKING*  
*FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE, and the glori-*  
*ous appearing of the great God and our Sa-*  
*viour Jesus Christ.* And in his second *Epi-*  
*stle to the Corinthians, Chap. iv. ver. 18.*  
having mentioned the Courage and Dili-  
gence with which he had preached the  
Gospel, he assigns the Reason of it in these  
Words, *While we LOOK not at the things*  
*that are seen, but at the things which are*  
*not seen.* And this, he tells us, was the Case  
of ALL, in former times, who stand re-  
corded as Examples of patient Suffering for  
Virtue's Sake; *They HAD RESPECT to the*  
*RECOMPENCE of the Reward.* They saw  
*THE PROMISES afar off,* and took all  
things patiently, *THAT THEY MIGHT*  
*OBTAIN a better Resurrection,* *Heb. xi. 26.*  
*13-35.*

We see from these Passages, that the  
Scripture, far from considering the being  
influenced

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influenced by future Hopes, as a Disparagement to the Virtue of a Man, represents it as its proper and natural Support. And if the Notion of *Virtue* and *Religion* would not admit of this Support, the Consequence must be, that the Gospel, instead of bringing *Life and Immortality to Light*, should have left it under its natural Obscurity. We must see then which are in the right, *Christ* and his Apostles, or these Philosophers. And in order to it, I advance this general Principle as a Maxim of common Sense, That as *Virtue*, in the Idea of it, refers itself to *Law* and *Authority*; so all Authority, whether human or divine, is founded in the Supposition of *Benefit* or *Advantage*, either already received, or hereafter expected, by those who are the Subjects of such Authority. Mere *Power* creates no *Authority*. If it did, it would follow, that where there is Power, there is also Authority; and this would establish an universal Tyranny. But Power must be attended with some *beneficial Influence*, to make it a proper Foundation for Law and Government, as we see it is in every kind of Government that we know any thing of. Whence ariseth the parental Au-

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thority but from those Benefits which, by the Order of Nature, Parents are made the Instruments of conveying to their Children? Or whence the Authority of *States* and *Kingdoms*, but from the beneficial Influences of Society, in respect of what is most dear and valuable to us, our Lives and our Properties? Strip human Governments of this Circumstance, and they will be mere *Despotism*; and so will the Government of God be, if you should divest him of his Character, of being the common Parent and Benefactor to Mankind; upon which Character *Paul* and *Barnabas* rightly place that Homage which we are to pay him, *Acts* xiv. 15. 17. where, having preached to the People of *Antioch*, that they should turn from their *Vanities* unto the living God, they support their Advice by this Argument, that HE indeed was their Benefactor, and not those *Idols* whom they vainly worshipped as Benefactors. GOD *which made the Heaven and Earth, and the Sea and all things that are therein*—left not himself [at any time] without *Witness* [that HE is to be worshipped] in that he DID GOOD, and gave us Rain from Heaven and fruitful

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*fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* God challenges our Obedience, as he is our Creator and Preserver. *In him we live and move and have our Being,* says St. Paul to the *Athenians*, *Acts* xvii. 28. But it is supposed that our Creation is a *Benefit* to us; for had God created us not to Happiness but to *Misery*, he could have challenged no Obedience from us; a Notion so deeply rooted in the universal Sense of Mankind, that the ancient heathen *Polytheism* was founded entirely upon it; for those false Gods were always worshipped under the Character of *BENEFACTORS*.

It will appear (I think) from these Considerations, that the absolute *Disinterestedness* of Virtue is a mere Fiction; and that those who place Religion upon this Bottom, however seemingly they may make it a Compliment, in reality sap the very Foundation upon which it stands. For if *Law* and *Authority* are not disinterested things, (as has been proved) it will follow, that neither can *Virtue* (which hath Reference to *Law* or *Authority*) be a disinterested thing.



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Virtue, is Obedience to God as the supreme Legillator. The Authority of God therefore must first be established before you can exercise Virtue; for to treat that as Authority which is not Authority, is absurd. But you cannot establish the Authority of God without considering him as your Benefactor; nor can you therefore exercise Virtue without a View to Benefit; and whether the Benefit is already received or lies in Prospect, it makes no Difference so long as Benefit is admitted as the Foundation of your Conduct. A Benefit received is a Reward in Hand;

It is not then *simply* a Regard to our own Benefit or Advantage, that disparages our Conduct, and destroys Virtue; but it may indeed, and will be, destroyed by *wrong Motives*, and attending to slender Advantages, when our Thoughts ought to be directed to higher things. This is frequently the Case in human Life, and from some Instances of this Kind (ill applied) I suppose that the Objection may have taken its Rise. If a Man gives a Sum of Money to relieve the Poor, not with a benevolent Mind,

Mind, but out of Vanity and Ostentation; or if he does his Neighbour a good Turn, with no other View than the securing as good or a better to be done to himself; the one is not Charity, the other is not Friendship, and neither of them is Virtue. And is not the Reason plain? The Cases suppose the Thing not done which Virtue directs should be done. For the Law of Charity or Friendship is, not to do an Act simply beneficial to another, but to do it with a benevolent Mind. It is the same thing if, in any other Instance, a Man does the external Act which the Law prescribes, not out of respect to the Authority which commands it, but considering it as an Instrument useful to some temporal Advantage. But the Fault in this sort of Conduct lies not in this, that a Man acts by Motives of Benefit to himself; but in this, that he acts by Motives of his own chusing, against the Spirit and Intention of the Law; which, as it implies a Preference of lesser Advantages to greater, is Folly, and as it carries with it a Neglect of the Authority of the supreme Legislator, is Iniquity into the Bargain. But surely there can be nothing  
wrong

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wrong in attending to those Motives which the Law itself proposes; or if there be, it falls equally upon the Legislator. For if it is inconsistent with the Virtue of a Man to look for a Reward, it must be as inconsistent with the Wisdom of God to offer one; and this is the Point that the Objection drives at. But vain is the Attempt, unless it can be shewn, that Authority cannot be reasonably exercised or submitted to, if any body is to be the better for it; which is a Contradiction to common Sense, and destroys (as has been shewn) all Law and Government in the World.

The Truth of the Case then seems to be this; that in respect of all Advantages that offer a Disparagement to the Law, Virtue is, and must be, a disinterested thing; for what disgraces the Law, must also be a Disgrace to the human Conduct. And of this kind are all the Advantages of this World, when they come to stand in Competition with the Rewards of a Life to come. I do not think that temporal Advantages, merely as such, are an improper Foundation for Religion. For the *Jews* were under a Co-  
venant

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venant with God, established upon the  
Foot of temporal Promises; and the Obe-  
dience which they paid in view of these  
Promises, was undoubtedly a reasonable Ser-  
vice, as it was Obedience paid upon Mo-  
tives proposed by the Legislator himself.  
But if, instead of attending to these Pro-  
mises, and waiting for the Accomplish-  
ment of them from the Hand of Provi-  
dence, they should any of them have set  
up Motives of their own, and acted upon  
the Views of present Interest, or Ambition,  
or Vain-glory (of which Sort of Conduct  
the *Pharisees* were remarkably guilty) this  
would have been placing their Obedience  
upon a wrong Bottom, and would have  
destroyed its Value in the Sight of God.  
And this must ever be the Case under  
every Religious Dispensation, where the  
Law is externally complied with, but with-  
out Attention to the Authority of God, and  
the Promises upon which the Law is esta-  
blished. But to lay it down universally,  
that in serving God a Man ought absolutely  
to divest himself of all Regard to his own  
Happiness, is a very great Absurdity. I  
can think of no other Reason worthy of  
God



God why he sent us into Being, than this, that he might communicate to us of his Happiness. If then Happiness is God's End in respect to Man, it must be Man's End in respect to himself, and his own Conduct; and he that thinks he can shew a better, reproaches infinite Wisdom as acting unwisely.

Upon this Principle, I cannot help thinking, that it is so far from being an Objection to the Gospel, that it proposes a Reward to well-doing, that it would have been an Objection to it (not to be answered) if it had proposed none. For a System that proposes Virtue as its End, ought to administer the Means that are necessary to support Virtue, of which a Reward to well-doing is the first and chief. St. Paul seems to have been of this Opinion, *Heb. xi. 6.* where he says, *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a REWARDER of them that diligently seek him;* which is telling us in effect, that you may as reasonably expect Religion in one that denies the Being of a God, as in one that denies his Providence in rewarding Virtue.

And

And the thing is plain ; for though the Ideas of Right and Wrong are as distinct from each other, as the Ideas of Number, Magnitude, or Proportion (in all the Varieties of them) are distinct ; yet I know of no Being that is qualified to maintain a regular, uniform Conduct merely upon the Strength of such Ideas, excepting the one supreme Being ; and the Reason why He is so qualified is, because he has in himself Happiness essentially full and complete. The Mind of Man necessarily feels its own Happiness, or the Want of it ; and by the same Necessity by which it tastes and enjoys the present Good, it covets that which is to come ; and it is altogether as impossible, that God should establish a System of moral Government, in opposition to this Principle, as that he should have established the material System upon Laws which interfere with the essential Properties of material Substances. What *Gravitation* is in the natural World, that the *Propensity* of the Soul to its own Good is in the moral World ; and as the Destruction of the one would infer a Dissolution of the whole material System, the Destruction of the other would

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would be attended with a like Effect in the moral. It is necessary therefore that (in the final Issue of things) Obedience to the Law of God should coincide with human Happiness, that is, that there should be a Reward to Virtue, and this in Proportion to the Perfection of our moral State. This Notion places God and Man each in their proper Light : God as ruling the World with Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness ; and Man as pursuing his natural End, and finding it in his Obedience to the Will of his Creator. But if the Law of God should direct one Way, and the supreme Happiness of Man lye another, there could be no Consistency in the Human Conduct, nor Harmony in the Government of God. Man must either forsake his natural End, which is one Absurdity ; or he must renounce all Allegiance to his Maker, which is another Absurdity ; and God would demand as due from Man, what Man, if he has any Regard to himself (which in the Nature of things is and must be the closest Interest) can never pay.

That

(ii) That the **SUMMUM BONUM**, or **SOVEREIGN GOOD** of (Man, is the supreme Rule of human Conduct; is the universal Sense of Mankind. The ancient Philosophers all agreed in this; but the Difficulty was where to find it. They who placed it in carnal Pleasure, destroyed all Religion of course; and they who placed it in Virtue (where, no doubt, it ought to be placed) found it difficult to explain themselves so as to make their Notions agree with Fact and Experience. It is indeed impossible to find Man's supreme Good in Virtue, if you carry your Thoughts no farther than to the present State of things. For we find not that Concurrence, or Coincidence of Virtue with Happiness, that is necessary to make it our supreme Good. And hence it is, that the common natural Argument for a future State takes its Rise. For Reason not seeing a Reward for Virtue in this World, expects in another; and this accounts (and alone can account) for the Inequalities that appear in God's Government in respect of the Distribution of Good and Evil. But what natural Light gathers by

I Deduction



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Deduction and Consequence, the Gospel expressly stipulates; and had not *Christ* left it a very clear Point, that there was a Reward in Store, he would have had little Cause to expect, that those whom he called to be his Disciples, should forsake all to follow him. The Disciples of *Christ* tell him as much, *Matt. xix. 27.* where *Peter* says, for himself and for all the rest, *Behold! we have forsaken all and followed thee; WHAT SHALL WE HAVE THEREFORE?* Something, you see, they expected in the way of Recompence, that should make it worth their Pains. And our Saviour in his Answer, at ver. 29. confesses the Reasonableness of this Expectation. *Every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my Name's sake, shall inherit eternal Life.*

There is, indeed, one Passage of our Saviour which may seem to look another way; and that is *Luke xvii. 9, 10.* where he tells his Disciples, that *when they should have done all those Things which were commanded them, they would deserve no Thanks;*

Thanks, that they would be unprofitable Servants, as having done no more than *that which was their Duty to do.* This, I say, may seem to import, that a Disciple of Christ is in all Cases, and under every Circumstance that may be put, bound to obey his Laws, though he should not have proposed a Reward to well doing; for he that proposes a Reward offers something more than Thanks. But this, certainly, was not our Saviour's Meaning. For it is to be observed, that he speaks to his Disciples as under the Relation of Servants. Such they are styled in the Text; and the Comparison by which this Passage is introduced, places them in that Light. *Which of you, having a SERVANT plowing or feeding Cattle, will say unto him by and by when he is come from the Field, Go and sit down to Meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that Servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not, so likewise YE, &c.* Let me now ask, What is the Reason why a com-

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mon Servant deserves *no Thanks* for doing his Master's Work? Is it not because the Master pays him Wages? Undoubtedly; for if he paid him none, he would have Cause more than enough to be thankful. In the Comparison therefore it is plain, that the Wages are presupposed, and so they are in the Application; that is, the Disciples of *Christ*, considered as his *Servants*, must be understood as entitled to Wages; and so our Saviour tells them they *were*, in another Place; *And he that REAPETH receiveth WAGES, and gathereth Fruit unto Life eternal*, John iv. 36. This was the Wages which *Christ* had assigned his Servants from the Beginning; and this considered, he owed them *no Thanks*; he became not their Debtor, by any thing they could do in Obedience to his Will at *present*, because the Wages which they were to receive would be an ample Compensation. Let us now see the Pertinency of this Remark to the Matter in hand when our Saviour made it.

We read at the 5<sup>th</sup> Verse, that *the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our Faith.*

What

What are we to understand to have been the Drift of this Petition? Our Saviour, in his Answer at the next Verse, seems plainly enough to intimate, how He understood it. *If ye had Faith as a Grain of Mustard Seed, ye might say unto this Sycamore Tree, Be thou plucked up, and be thou planted in the Sea; and it should obey you.* The Faith which the Apostles wanted, was Faith for the Purpose of working Miracles; for why did our Saviour mention this Effect of Faith, but because he saw it to be uppermost in their Thoughts? The Apostles did many Miracles; but their Power as yet was limited, as appears from *Matt. xvii. 14, & seq.* where our Saviour cured a Lunatick whom his Disciples could not cure. And when they asked him, privately, why they could not, he told them, it was *because of their Unbelief*, adding these Words (which are parallel to those in the Passage under Consideration) *Verily I say unto you, If ye have Faith as a Grain of Mustard Seed, ye shall say unto this Mountain, Remove hence to yonder Place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you.* Finding then in themselves this Defect, and being unwilling



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ling in this respect to appear inferior to their Master, they apply to him for the *Increase* of their *Faith*. But what says our Saviour? Why, after having acknowledged the Power of Faith, he plainly excepts against their Proposal; and shews them, in the Comparison of a common Master and Servant, that they asked what was improper. There would be a Time when they should have what they desired, as there is a Time for Servants to eat and drink as well as for the Master. But as Servants do not eat and drink till the Master is first served, so neither were they to have the Faith they asked for till his Work was finished; and then they should have it, as he told them plainly, afterwards; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me, the Works that I do shall he do also because I go unto the Father*, John xiv. 12. which imports, that this Plenitude of Power, of which the Apostles were now so desirous, was not to be granted them till he should *go unto the Father*, that is, till after his Resurrection, when *all Power* should be *given unto him, both in Heaven and Earth* (Matt. xxviii. 18.) and he would

send

send them forth under the Aids of the Holy Ghost, as he himself *was sent of the Father*, John xx. 21. And to silence all Murmurs and Complaining at this Refusal of their Request, he gives them to understand, that in their Submission to his Will in this respect, he required no more of them than what every Master expects from his Servants, who, as such, are bound to a like Obedience, and are in this Sense *unprofitable* to their Master, as he is not *beholden* to them; as they do no more for him than by the Relation in which he stands, he is *entitled* to require.

We see then, upon the whole, how little this Passage of Scripture has to do with the Notion I have been confuting, the *absolute Disinterestedness* of Virtue. If the Apostles had asked a Reward for their Services, and our Saviour had given the same Answer, it would have been to the Purpose. But they ask no such thing (as there was no need to ask what had been already promised them) but, the Reward supposed, they ask the Increase of their Faith, thinking their present State in this respect to have

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 been defective. If they had asked the Increase of Wealth, the Increase of Honour, or any other Thing relative to their Condition in this World, the Answer would have been equally proper, which bears this general Sense, that we have no Pretence to challenge or complain of God on the account of any Disadvantages, seeming or real, which we may lie under in respect of our present Circumstances, considering that we are serving a Master, to whom the very best Services we can do, must fall greatly short of the Wages he has assigned us.

I thought it might be of use to explain this difficult Passage of Scripture, and to shew, that in respect of the Argument under Consideration, the Gospel is throughout uniform, and consistent with itself.

*Of the Equity of the Law of Christ, in respect of the Helps it administers.*

From the REWARD then let us proceed to that other Point in which (as I have said) the Equity of the Law of Christ is concerned, viz. the *Helps and Assistances* administered by the Gospel to guard against Transgression, view being had

had to our Strength or Weakness. This Subject necessarily leads us to consider the natural State of Man, which is thus set forth by St. Paul, Rom. vii. 21—23. *I find a Law, that when I would do good, Evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward Man: But I see another Law in my Members, warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members.* And again, Gal. v. 17. *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.*

What Change the Nature of Man suffered by the Fall, is neither easy nor necessary to be explained. What the Apostle here says, is what we all experience, viz. that there is a perpetual Struggle between the Flesh and the Spirit; Reason directing to one Way of acting, and Appetite soliciting another Way. And in this the Gospel has nothing specially to do; for the natural State of Man will be just what it is, whether you admit Revelation, or whether you admit it not. I am not therefore concerned



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shew Reasons, why Mankind is placed in such a State, or to answer the Objections of those who think it hard to be reconciled to our Notions of the Justice, Wisdom, or Goodness of God, that he hath left our Way to Happiness beset with so much Difficulty and Danger ; for these Objections lie as full against God's general Providence, as against his particular Providence as manifested by the Gospel Revelation. But there is one thing for which Revelation is answerable, because natural Reason says nothing about it, and that is the Agency of *evil Spirits*, who, as the Scripture represents the Case, are perpetually conspiring with natural Appetite, to entice us from our Allegiance to God, and draw us into Sin. We have seen before, that the Devil tempted our first Parents ; and it is the same Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience, as St. Paul tells us, *Eph. ii. 2.* Our Saviour himself said to the unbelieving Jews, *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father ye will do,* John viii. 44. And upon this Principle, that the Devil is the Author and Promoter of Sin, St. Paul says to the *Corinthians, I*

am jealous over you with a godly jealousy—  
lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve  
through his Subtily, so your Minds should  
be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in  
Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. That is, that the  
Devil should seduce you as he seduced our  
first Parents. St. Peter bids us be sober and  
vigilant, because our Adversary the Devil,  
as a roaring Lion, walketh about seeking  
whom he may devour, 1 Epist. v. 8. And  
though St. James tells us (Chap. i. ver. 14.)  
that every Man is tempted when he is drawn  
away of his own Lust and enticed; yet, in  
his account, Sin is of the Devil also; for  
he bids us to resist the Devil, Chap. iv. ver. 7.  
and speaking of a bad Tongue, he saith,  
It is set on Fire of HELL, that is, by the  
Instigation of those evil Spirits who come  
forth from Hell, the Habitation appointed  
for them, Chap. iii. ver. 6. It would  
be useless to add more Proofs in so clear a  
Case.

This Part of the Christian Doctrine Un-  
believers are wont to treat with Ridicule;  
and, in Truth, it is all they have for it.  
For to shew by Reason and Argument that  
there

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there are no such Beings, or that they have no such Intercourse with the human Race, as the Scripture represents them to have, is utterly impossible. I know of no Reason why any one should deny the Existence of Spirits evil or good, but this, that they do not fall within the Notice of our Senses. But this can be no Proof, unless it were true, that nothing is or *can be* which Sense doth not perceive; which Principle infers the Denial of a God, and is confuted by every Day's Experience. Nor is it at all difficult to understand, that Spirits by their Agency may influence the Mind towards Good or Evil; by exciting good or evil Thoughts; by raising or by abating the Force of natural Appetite. We know that many natural Substances have this Virtue. Give a Man Opium, and it will lay him asleep. Intoxicate him with Wine, and it will make him foolish or mad. One Disposition of the Body makes us gay and chearful; another inclines to Seriousness or Melancholy. And why may not invisible Spirits have the same Power, either by acting upon the corporeal Instrument, or upon the Mind immediately as material Substances

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stances do? As to the moral Fitness of the thing, that God should suffer us thus to be tempted; if you can reconcile the general Notion of God's permitting us to be tempted with his Wisdom and Goodness (for which, as I have said just now, Natural Religion is to answer, as much as Revealed) you may easily account for his permitting this particular Species of Temptation. For whether a Man is tempted merely by the Motions of his own Lusts, or by the Instrumentality of evil Men, or evil Spirits, it makes no Difference, provided the Temptation does not exceed the Measure of our Strength to resist it. And this is the Case. For St. James tells us, in the Passage above cited, that *if we resist the Devil, he will flee from us*: And St. Paul, that *God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that we may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 13.

This then being the natural State of Man, that we are under perpetual Temptations, from the Motions of natural Appetite, and the Solicitations of the Devil and his Instruments; let us now consider what Helps the



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the Gospel provides to strengthen and support us under them. The first of these is the Promise of the Holy Ghost; *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever*, John xiv. 16. And St. Paul, speaking of the whole Body of faithful Christians, says, *they are a holy Temple in the Lord, an Habitation of God through the Spirit*, Eph. ii. 21, 22. And in many other Places of Scripture, Christians are represented as the *Temple of God*, or, *the Temple of the Holy Ghost*, which *dwelleth* in them; which kind of Expressions denote a special Presence of the Holy Ghost in the Hearts of good Men, to be their Support and Comforter. There is great Propriety in this, that as Nature leaves us under the Empire of the wicked One, Grace should consign us to the Protection of God's holy Spirit. And it is a full Answer to the Objection that God suffers the Devil to tempt us, that he, by his own Presence, will guard us against his Temptations, and enable us to *tread him under our Feet*, Rom. xvi. 20. And what can an Unbeliever have to say against this Doctrine but this, that we ourselves feel not the Operations of the holy Spirit,

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Spirit, so as to be able to distinguish them from the natural Operations of our Minds? It is true; we feel not the Operations of the Spirit, whether good or evil; but this does not prove that there are no such Operations. The Body grows or decays; attains a healthy or a sickly Constitution, by the Operations of natural Causes; and yet we feel not these Operations within ourselves, nor know any thing of them but by their Effects. And why may not the Spirit work in the same imperceptible Manner that natural Causes do? It is supposed in this Account, that the Spirit operates in such a Manner as is perfectly consistent with the natural Liberty of Man; that is, so as not to offer any Violence to the Will (which would be to destroy the very Notion of moral Agency) but only to move or incline it. And this agrees with what the Scripture says; for as the *Devil* may be resisted, so may the *Holy Ghost*, Acts vii. 51. And therefore St. Paul, though he tells us, that *it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do*; yet exhorts us at the same time to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, Philip. ii. 12, 13.

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In the next place we may and ought to reckon among the *Helps* and *Assistances*, to Virtue, the *Institutions* and *Ordinances* of the Gospel; by which the Disciples of *Christ* are held together as one visible Society, under the publick Profession of his Faith, and a joint Communion in the Dispensations of his Word and Sacraments. Unbelievers are wont to complain of these as arbitrary Laws; and arbitrary they are in this Sense, that their whole Force and Virtue, as Laws, depends upon the Will of the Lawgiver. But if they would have us to understand, that they are Impositions of mere Will, without regard to Use or Propriety in respect of the Persons upon whom they are imposed; *St. Paul* instructs them better, *Eph. iv. 11, &c.* where speaking of *Christ's* constituting a visible Church, and that he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, &c. he tells us, it was for the perfecting the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of *Christ*, till we all come, in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of *Christ*; that is (as the Apostle presently

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presently explains himself) that we may not  
*walk in the Vanity of our Minds*; that we  
may *put off the old Man, which is corrupt,*  
*according to the deceitful Lusts,* and being re-  
*newed in the Spirit of our Minds, put on the*  
*new Man, which, after God, is created in*  
*Righteousness and true Holiness.* It is true,  
that all *positive* Laws are a Restraint upon  
natural Liberty: And who will pretend to  
say, that God hath not a Right to do that  
which Civil Authority does every Day?  
Wise Magistrates will not impose Laws  
wantonly; but for Ends subservient to  
the publick Good: And it is for publick  
Benefit that God hath appointed the  
Gospel Ordinances, to wit, that being  
established in the Faith of our Lord and  
Saviour *Jesus Christ*, we may attain to  
that Sobriety, Righteousness, and Godli-  
ness, to which our Faith engages us. And  
most true it is, that he who religiously and  
conscientiously observes the *Law of Christ*,  
in these respects; by commemorating him  
frequently in partaking of the Sacrament of  
his Body and Blood; by giving due Attend-  
ance to Prayer, to Meditation, and to the  
hearing and reading his Word; lives in a  
State of perpetual Discipline, by which



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Conscience is always kept awake to reproach and condemn him when he doth evil, and to put him upon that vigorous Opposition to Flesh and Blood, which is necessary to carry us through the Temptations of the World, which never can prevail but when Conscience sleeps, and those Considerations which should support our Virtues, grow faint and languid upon the Mind.

This Principle, that the Ordinances of the Gospel stand in the rank of Means and Helps to Virtue, ought carefully to be attended to ; because if it were so, that they were intended to serve us instead of Virtue, or were held in more account than a good Life, they were very justly to be condemned. But though Unbelievers are very apt to represent them in this Light, and careless or partial Christians may mistake their true Meaning ; the Gospel itself is perfectly clear in this respect. We know with what Severity *Christ* reprehends the *Jews* for laying more Strefs upon the external Appointments of their Law than was fit and reasonable, *Matt. xxiii. 23. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, for you pay Tytbe of Mint, and Anise, and Cummin, and have omitted the WEIGHTIER MAT-TERS*

TERS of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith. We see here that moral Duties have the Preference given them to Matters of simple Institution; and that the doing one, whilst the other were neglected, availed nothing, but to their greater Condemnation. And this was true, not only in respect of these lesser things, the *tything Mint, and Anise, and Cummin*, but also in respect of those which were of the highest Account, their *Sacrifices* (i. e. in respect of their whole Ritual Law put together) as their Prophets had often<sup>1</sup> warned them. Agreeably to this Notion, that moral Duties are the *weightier Matters* of the Law, our Saviour decides (and the Prophets before him had decided) that in Cases where both kinds of Duties cannot stand together, positive Appointments must give way to moral Duties, and not moral Duties to them. *Go ye* (says he to the *Jews*) *and learn what this meaneth, I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*, Matt. ix. 13. and Chap. xii. 7. from *Hoseab* vi. 5. It appears by the Cases to which our Saviour applied these Words, that as the Word *Sacrifice* is here used to ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah* l. 10—18. *Amos* v. 21, &c.

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press not only Sacrifices and Oblations of all kinds, but also each Circumstance and Article of Worship, with the several Observances appointed by the Law; so the Word *Mercy* takes in the whole Compass of moral Duties; and the Sense of the Passage is, that where the Law cannot be observed in respect of both, the former must give way to the latter, as to the more worthy<sup>m</sup>. What was true under the Legal Dispensation, is as true under the Evangelical, for the Reason is the same in respect of both; and there can be no doubt, but that our Saviour, in shewing the *Jews* what Regard was due to the Appointments of *Moses*, intended that his Disciples should learn in what Rank his own Institutions stood. But if you want plain Proof, hear what *St. Paul* says of the Institution of Baptism, *Rom. vi. 4. We are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life.* And of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, *1 Cor. xi. 28, 29. Let*

<sup>m</sup> See two excellent Discourses on this Subject in *Bp. Weston's Sermons*, Vol. I. Sermon. 1, 2.

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*a Man examine himself, and so let him eat*  
*of that Bread and drink of that Cup ; for he*  
*that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth*  
*and drinketh Damnation to himself, not dis-*  
*cerning the Lord's Body.*

Where now is the Fault ? The Institutions of *Christ* are subservient to Virtue, in the way of Means and Instruments ; but they supersede no moral Duty ; they stand in the way of none ; for all the Duties of the Moral Law, whether they relate to Justice or Mercy, challenge the Precedence. It is true (as I have just now observed) they are a Restraint upon natural Liberty ; and who shall presume to say, that God has not a Right to restrain natural Liberty ? Does not every Father or Master challenge this Right in his own Family ; and every Magistrate in his own Kingdom ? Is not this Right always exercised when Regulations are prescribed in things in themselves indifferent, to secure a right Behaviour in other Matters, in which Authority and Government are essentially concerned ? It is ; and to dispute the Reasonableness of this kind of Provisions, would be just as absurd as if you should

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question,



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question, whether when a Man hath plowed and sown his Land, it is reasonable for him to set Hedges or other Fences about it, to keep it from being trodden down. *Moses's* Law was burthened with such a Variety of external Rights, that *St. Peter*, in that great Question, whether *Christ's* Disciples were held to the Observance of it, calls it *a Yoke, which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear*, Acts xv. 10. And yet there can be no doubt, but that the Wisdom of God may be justified, in laying on this Burden, if it was found necessary, in order to prevent a worse Mischief; upon the same Principle that the Wisdom of a Physician will be justified in prescribing a severe Regimen, when the Disease is stubborn, and will not yield to gentler Means. How little Cause then is there to find fault with the Institutions of *Christ*, which can be a Burthen to none but to careless, unthinking Men, who look upon every thing as lost that is not given up to the Vanities of Life, and by that very Disposition shew, that they *want* what they *complain* of as a Grievance? It was to cure this Levity of Mind that these Ordinances were intended;

intended ; and no Man can say, that this is not a right Intention, who thinks Virtue and its Fruits to be a Benefit worth the owning. If you set any Value upon Life, you will not complain that you are put into a proper Way to restore a depraved Appetite, though the Remedy should be something disgustful. Nor, if you mean in good earnest to be virtuous, should you kick at these lesser kind of Restraints, which only help to prepare you to bear the greater with less Reluctancy.

The many Superstitions that have been engrafted upon the external Appointments of the Gospel, and the Divisions and Contentions that have arisen in relation to them, in almost all Ages of the Church, are Topics upon which the Enemies of Christianity delight very much to enlarge. But such Objections as these scarce deserve a serious Answer ; for the Gospel is nothing concerned with them. If these Appointments were in themselves, or in their own Nature, calculated to serve to no good Purposes, their being liable to bad Uses, would have been a Reason why they should never

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have been made. But it is childish to think, that God should be tied up from making wholesome and salutary Provisions, because weak or bad Men may pervert them to a wrong Use. That the Ordinances of the Gospel are such Provisions, the Reasons above-mentioned very plainly shew, and will yet farther appear, if it be considered, that the constituting a visible Church upon the Foot of external Ordinances, and the Exercise of a publick Worship, was not only proper, but even necessary, to the Preservation of the Christian Faith in its essential Points, and carrying down the Profession of it from its first Promulgation to succeeding Ages. Had it not been for this, it may very justly be presumed, that ere this time Christianity would generally have been lost to the World. For though the Scriptures are a faithful Record of the Doctrines of *Christ*, it is principally by their publick Use in the Church (where they have been constantly read) that they have been preserved from the Injuries of Time, and made a general Benefit. They might possibly have been preserved, as other ancient Writings are, for the Entertainment of the curious

rious and inquisitive ; but the Bulk of Mankind, for whose Use they were intended, would have been very little the better for them. In a word, no Religion ever yet subsisted without its external Appointments ; nor is it reasonable to think that any Religion ever can : And which is the safer Method, that God should prescribe for himself in such Matters, or leave it to Man to prescribe for him, is a Question which can bear no Dispute with any who know what human Inventions have in all Ages done of this sort, to the Shame of common Sense, and the Disgrace of common Virtue and Morality.

I have now gone through *Of the Sanction of the Law of Christ.* the previous Question concerning the Equity of the Law of *Christ* ; and have proved, that as to the subject Matter of it, the Law is holy, just, and good ; and in respect of the Reward it proposes, and the Helps and Assistances it administers, wisely adapted to the Exigencies of Mankind in this our fallen, corrupt Condition. To all which we must add (what needs only to be just mentioned)



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the gracious, condescending Terms upon  
which we stand with God, that he is at all  
times ready to accept of repenting Sinners;  
by which he hath provided, that no Man  
can want the proper Encouragement to do  
well, and all who die in their Sins are left  
without Excuse. So that there is plainly  
nothing on the part of the Law to hinder  
but that the Sanction may be just. We  
must then proceed to the Sanction itself, and  
enquire whether there be any thing in it  
that impeaches the Justice, Wisdom, or  
Goodness of God. By the Sanction, I mean  
the Penalty to be inflicted upon the Trans-  
gressors of the Law; which the Scripture  
calls *Hell—everlasting Fire—a Furnace of  
Fire—a Lake that burneth with Fire and  
Brimstone, prepared for the Devil and his  
Angels*. Whether by these Expressions we  
are to understand, a *material, elementary*  
Fire, is a very fruitless Question, and there-  
fore I shall not enter into it. It is enough  
for us to know, that wicked Men shall be  
very miserable in a future State; eternally  
miserable. And this severe Penalty is de-  
clared, to shake Terror over the Heads of  
those whom the Promises of God's Mercies  
in

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in *Christ* will not hold; as our Saviour intimates, *Math. x. 28.* **FEAR** not them, which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul: But, rather **FEAR** HIM, which is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell.

A Question may here be moved, whether *Fear* be a proper Principle upon which to place moral Virtue. The Doubt arises from a Notion, to which already much has been said, viz. That Virtue must be a *disinterested* thing; and the Resolution which has been given in respect of *Rewards*, will as well serve in respect of *Punishment*. For if it is no Disparagement to the Virtues of a Man, that he does well in hopes of receiving Good; it can be no Disparagement, that he does well in order to the avoiding Evil, which is a *negative* Good. Fear, as well as Hope, may be directed to an improper Object, and when it is so directed it will destroy Virtue. As suppose one should fear Man more than God; and do that upon the Views of some present Mischief to be avoided, which he would not do, either for the Reasonableness of the thing itself, or upon the Force of those much greater Motives

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Motives which Religion sets before him. And this was certainly the Poet's Idea, in a Passage (which some have weakly applied to the present Question) where, when he would describe a bad Servant, he says,

*Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore;*  
*Tunibil admittes in te, FORMIDINE POENÆ.*

Hor. Ep. Lib. i. 16.

He is certainly a bad Servant, who avoids offending his Master only for fear of being beaten. Why? Why, because the proper Object of Virtue is left out of the Question. But if Fear be directed to the *supreme Being*, and becomes to us a Principle of Action, there is no Disparagement either to God or to ourselves. Not the first; because it is a Confession of his Justice, which is as truly a Perfection in God, as Mercy and Goodness are. Not the second; because we act upon a proper Motive; a Motive proposed by the Legislator himself, which is doing Honour to his Authority. A right Conduct, then, founded upon the Fear of God (that is, upon the Dread of those Punishments, which He hath threatened to inflict upon Sinners) is *Virtue*, so far as it goes,

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goes, though it is only the first Degree of it.  
The Scripture carries it no higher. *The  
Fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of  
Wisdom*, Psalm cxi. 10. Prov. ix. 10. what  
Fear begins, that Hope finishes. But still  
the acting upon the Motive of *Fear* is acting  
upon a *right* Motive, otherwise it could not  
be the *Beginning* of Virtue.

But that to which Unbelievers bend their  
main Force is to shew, that the Punish-  
ments of a future State, as declared by the  
Gospel, are inconsistent with the Perfections  
of the Deity. Their Objections upon this  
Head therefore must be replied to. I set out  
upon this general Principle of Natural Re-  
ligion; that God is not only the Maker but  
the Governor of the World; and conse-  
quently hath a Right to punish the Breakers  
of his Laws, so far as the Ends of his Go-  
vernment make it necessary or fit. To pu-  
nish merely for punishing sake, or when no  
Use or Purpose of Government requires it,  
is unjust and cruel; but to punish when the  
Ends of Government require Punishment;  
is both just and necessary, or else Govern-  
ment is not to be justified. But God's  
Govern-



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Government, we are sure, may be justified. It is both right and fit that he should govern us, because he made us; and we are certain, that his Government is wise and just, because Wisdom and Justice are the essential Perfections of his Nature. So far then, I say, as the Use of Punishment is necessary to support this just and righteous Government, so far God has a Right to punish; nor can his Goodness or Benevolence intervene to hinder. For absolute, unlimited Benevolence, which makes no Distinction of Persons, or Things, or Circumstances, is not a *Perfection*, but a real *Weakness*, as we all know and confess in Matters which concern the human Conduct. The Goodness of God is in this Sense *infinite*, that it knows no Bounds but what his Wisdom prescribes to it: But if God's Goodness is to be directed by his Wisdom, it must be exercised in a Manner that will consist with the Wisdom of his Government, that is, in a Manner that will consist with the Use of Punishment, so far as the Ends and Purposes of his Government require.

There

There is no question to be made, but that the End of God's creating Man, was to make him happy. But he must be understood as proposing this in a way suitable to the Nature of free Agents, and so as not to give up his natural Right of Government. It is necessary that God should maintain his own Government, because his Government provides for the universal Good of Mankind, who will all be happy if they will all follow the Path which his Wisdom points out to them. But if Men will set up their own Wisdom in opposition to his, and seek Happiness in ways of their own chusing; God has undoubtedly a Right to restrain this Licentiousness, by any means that are necessary, and therefore by the Use of Punishment, if *that* is necessary. And in this case we must not say that God is not good, because he makes his Creatures miserable, who, by first making themselves *wicked*, are become unfit Objects for the Exercise of his Goodness.

These Principles in all human Governments stand uncontested; and why will they

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they not as well hold in respect of the Government of God? What Unbelievers are wont to say upon this Subject, turns, I think, upon this Distinction, that "God being infinitely sufficient in himself, cannot upon his own account be affected, whether his Laws be or be not observed." That "he cannot be made angry, provoked, or grieved by the Conduct of us poor Mortals, nor gain any Comfort or Satisfaction from the Actions of his Creatures." This was the Manner of the *Epicureans* of old, to set up an absolute, lawless Indulgence, upon the infinite Perfections of the supreme Being. A weak, as well as wicked Attempt! For though it be true, that God cannot be hurt by the Actions of Men, as Men are hurt by the Actions of one another; a Question still remains, "Whether there is not one Species of Conduct, suited to the End of God's creating Man, which, by all proper and necessary Means, he is concerned to secure?" In the Sense we are now speaking, it is very certain that God was not benefited by creating us; yet hath he called us into Being. Why? Why, because in his

his Wisdom he thought it proper so to do. Now if God is justified in creating us, though he himself received no Benefit by creating us (which none but mere Atheists will deny) why may he not as well be justified in using the necessary Means to keep us steady to the End for which he created us, though he is not hurt when we deviate from that End? It is (you say) nothing to God, whether Man obeys his Laws, or whether he obeys them not. It is as little to him, sure, whether the Sun rises or sets; whether the Seasons of the Year return in their natural Order; or whether any natural Cause produceth its natural Effect. God's Happiness is concerned in none of these things; but his Wisdom is thus concerned in all of them, that if it was fit for him to make a World to continue for a certain Period, it must be as fit, till such Period is determined, to preserve and maintain those natural Powers, without which the whole Frame and System of things would suffer a Dissolution. The Application is obvious. For Man also has a Part, and a principal Part, to fill, in the universal System; and when he affects to run out of his proper Sphere,



Sphere, it is alike becoming the Wisdom of God to restrain him, not indeed by that kind of Force by which the material System is held together, but by such Inducements, whether of Hope or Fear, as are consistent with his Nature, considered as a free and rational Being.

The Argument, as it now stands, goes no farther than to shew, that, supposing the Use of Punishment necessary in the Government of God, he has a Right to inflict Punishment upon the Transgressors of his Laws. And that it is necessary, there can be no room to question; because Fact and Experience shew it to be necessary in human Government, which is a Part of God's universal Government. Magistrates rule by God's Appointment; and therefore Punishment lawfully inflicted by the Magistrate, is *the Wrath of God against evil Doers*, as St. Paul states it, *Rom. xiii.* Besides, God hath so constituted the human Nature, that in many respects Sin carries with it its own Punishment, in its *natural* Effects and Consequences; which is Evidence that the Wisdom of God saw it necessary to punish

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 Sin in *this* World. And if Sinners find  
 their Punishment in this World, and will  
 not be reformed, it is reasonable to think  
 that they will find it, more *certainly* find it,  
 in the next, lest Man should triumph  
 against his Master. There were (I confess)  
 among the ancient Philosophers, those who  
 argued strongly, that good Men shall be  
 happy in a future State, who yet seemed to  
 deny, that bad ones will be "miserable;  
 and it may perhaps be thought, that God  
 would make a sufficient Distinction, if  
 whilst good Men meet with the Reward of  
 their Virtues, the bad ones should, after  
 Death, have ° *no Existence*. But the least  
 that can be said is, that we are not compe-  
 tent Judges what is, or is not *sufficient* in

\* Mors aut planè negligenda est, si omnino EXTIN-  
 GUIT animum; aut etiam optanda, si aliquo eum de-  
 ducit, ubi sit futurus æternus. Atqui TERTIUM cer-  
 tè NIHIL inveniri potest. Quid igitur timeam, si aut  
 NON MISER post mortem, aut BEATUS etiam futurus  
 sum? Cic. de Senect. 19.—Quomodo igitur aut cur  
 mortem malum tibi videri dicis, quæ AUT BEATOS  
 nos efficiet, AUT NON MISEROS sensu carentes. *Id.*  
*Tusc. Disp. 1.*

° Hoc ipsum est pœna gravissima æterna Beatitudi-  
 ne in æternum privari, & æternum perire. *Walzogen.*  
*in Matt. xxv. 46.*

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this

this Case. For ought that any Man can shew to the contrary, it may *not* be sufficient; and this is all that is necessary for us to say: For our Business at present is not to establish the Doctrine of future Punishments upon natural Principles; but to guard it against Objections from natural Principles.

It may be said then, in the way of Objection, that "Punishment ought to be intended either for *Correction* or *Example*, "and is therefore proper in this World, "where we are upon our Tryal, and have "the Opportunity of being influenced by "it in our Behaviour; not so in the next "World, when the State of Tryal will be "over, and every Man's Condition finally "determined." But to this the Answer is, that *to punish* is not the first and principal End of penal Laws; but the Intention is, by *declaring* the Penalty, to *prevent* the Transgression. The Law had rather that Men should not offend, than that they should want Correction; rather that they should make themselves Examples of Obedience, than that they should be made Ex-  
amples

amples of Justice. But when the Offence is committed, and Punishment follows, the Law then becomes the Instrument of Correction and Example : But you see very plainly that this is but a secondary, accidental Effect, in which the Legislator's Right to declare the Penalty hath nothing to do : For this flows not from the Capacity of the Subject to repeat the Offence, or to be made an Example to others ; but from the Right which the Legislator has to support his Authority in the first Instance. If then the original Right to declare a Penalty hath *essentially* no relation to Correction or Example ; it will follow, that the Right of punishing can have no such relation to them neither. For a Right to declare a Penalty, involves in it a Right to execute, in case the Penalty is incurred ; because otherwise, the Right to declare a Penalty, would be a Right to declare *against* Right, which is absurd. Upon this it is that the whole Force and Virtue of a penal Sanction rests. For if it were understood, that the Legislator has no Authority to execute what the Law declares ; such Declaration



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tion would, to all Intents and Purposes, be an absolute Nullity.

It remains then, that if God foresaw that the Punishments of this Life would not be sufficient to lay such a Restraint upon evil Doers, as would answer the wise Ends of his Providence; he had a Right to declare Punishment in a future State, and having declared it, a Right also to inflict it, even though there should be no room either for Correction or for Example in a future State. But I think that the Objection goes a great deal too far, in supposing that there will be no Use of *Example* in the next World, of which we know so little. We know that the next World is a Place of Happiness for good Men, and of Misery to bad ones: But how the next World is circumstanced in respect of other Beings, of which there may be a great Variety (some of them, perhaps, in a State of Tryal, as we now are) to whom the Justice of God, in punishing incorrigible Sinners, may serve as a profitable Example; of this, I say, we know nothing, any farther than that our Saviour seems to intimate, that at the general Judgment, both

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both good and bad Men shall stand as Examples to the invisible World. *Whosoever shall confess me before Men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the Angels of God; but he that denieth me before Men, shall be denied before the Angels of God, Luke xii. 8, 9.*

But the great Stumbling Block is, that the Gospel declares EVERLASTING Punishment to Sinners. I shall not enter into those Doubts which have been raised by some Christian Writers, whether the Duration of the State of future Punishments is described in Scripture in such Terms as imply that it will be strictly and absolutely *without End*; but, taking the common Opinion (which leaves to the Objection its full Weight) for granted, shall consider how this Point stands in the view of Reason. And here I must desire you to take notice, that I do not undertake to shew, *a priori*, that the Justice of God *requires* him to punish Sinners eternally; but this, I say (and it is enough for me to say) that they who pretend that it will not *consist* with God's

Justice

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Justice to punish Sinners eternally, affirm what they can never prove. For how do they attempt it? Why, thus—"Punishment ought to bear a just Proportion to the Offence: But between a *temporary* Offence and an *eternal* Punishment, there is no Proportion." This is the common Language of Objectors; and to avoid asking many Questions, I will suppose the Meaning to be this, that "it is against natural Justice, and that equitable Proportion that should be preserved between the Crime and the Punishment, that Offences committed in *this temporary State*, and attended only with *temporary Advantages*, should be followed by eternal Punishment." I readily admit to the Objectors, that in order to clear the Justice of God, it is necessary that there be a due Proportion between Crimes and Punishments, in this Sense, that the greatest Sinners should, proportionably, be the greatest Sufferers; and this Supposition will very well stand with the Doctrine under Consideration. For supposing all bad Men upon a foot of Equality, in respect of the *Duration* of the *State* of Punishment, there

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there may be yet that *Difference* in the *Degrees* of Punishment, as (for ought I can understand) will be sufficient to establish the Justice of God. But the Objectors seem to be of Opinion, that "the Want  
" of Proportion in this single Point, viz.  
" the Duration of the State in which the  
" Offence is committed, and the Duration  
" of the State of Punishment, alone de-  
" stroys the Justice of such Punishment ;"  
which, I say, is that which they can never prove. If they insist on the contrary, it will be incumbent upon them to give some reasonable Account *where* this Proportion lies, which I take to be impossible; for *Proportion* excludes *Disproportion*, as well as *no* Proportion. Suppose that instead of declaring *eternal* Punishment to Sinners, the Gospel had declared the Punishment of a thousand Years. Would this have pleased you? If you say, Yes; shew a Reason why you say it, which will not as well serve, supposing that instead of *one* thousand Years of Punishment, the Gospel had declared *two* or *three* thousand, and so on. Or if you think *one* thousand Years *too much*, shew a Reason which will not as



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well hold in respect of any Period of *shorter* Duration. Tell me then, if you please, where is the Difference between saying, that you cannot shew a Reason which shall limit the Duration of the State of future Punishments to any given Period of Time; and saying, that you cannot shew a Reason why it may not last for ever.

The Truth of the Case therefore is, that the mere *Duration* of the State of Punishment (whether longer or shorter) hath no essential Relation to the *just Distribution* of Punishment; or (which comes to the same thing) no Relation that we know any thing of. There can be no doubt, but that every Man's Punishment will be proportioned to his Crimes, as every Man's Reward will be proportioned to his Virtues, *i. e.* by the *Degrees* of Punishment; thus much Justice seems to require. But the *Duration* of the State of Punishment may be determinable by other Considerations, respecting God's universal Government, of which we are not competent Judges. The Duration of the State of Punishment in this World, we see plainly, is determined by such Considerations.

derations. For the evil Consequences of vicious Actions (which are almost numberless) are the natural Punishments of those Actions, as I have observed; and whilst those are short and momentary, these are often long and lasting. And in respect of human Administrations, a Man may do that in one Day or one Hour, for which he shall justly suffer his whole Life after. If you ask a Reason for this, it is, that the Order and Constitution of Things, as established by Providence, makes it necessary that it should be so. And there seems to me to be no greater Difficulty in conceiving, that there may be Reasons of Providence that will make it necessary or fit, that Punishment in a future State, for Sins committed in this short Life, should extend to the *whole State* of our *future Existence*; than there is in apprehending, that Punishment in this Life, for Sins committed in a very small Part of it, may extend to the *whole State* of our *present Existence*. We are too apt (I suspect) when we are speculating upon this Subject, to consider the Human Race *alone*, as concerned in this Branch of God's providential Dispensations;

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tions; to represent this present State of  
Being to ourselves, as the first and principal  
End of our Creation, and the Punish-  
ments of the State which is to come, like  
Chains and Dungeons, contrived as mere  
Instruments of Discipline, for past Offens-  
ces. In this View of the Case, it will be  
very hard to reconcile the Eternity of fu-  
ture Punishments to the Goodness or Justice  
of God. But it may as reasonably be sup-  
posed (which I conceive to be the Truth  
of the Case) that the State of our future Ex-  
istence, though last in Order, was first in  
the Intention of Providence; that the next  
World is, properly, our Country, to which  
this Life is but a short Passage, and serves  
only as a State of Preparation; and the fu-  
ture State itself (so far as the human Race  
is concerned in it) but a Part of one grand  
System, in which an almost infinite Num-  
ber of other Beings (as I have hinted above)  
may be concerned. Is it not possible then  
to conceive, that this universal System, in  
all its Parts, may be settled upon unchange-  
able Laws, all of them wisely adjusted to  
the Perfection of the whole System taken  
together; and that the *Nature* of this Estab-  
lishment

ishment will not admit of more than one State of Tryal for the human Race, which shall determine every Man's Lot to endless Happiness, or to endless Misery? If it is possible to conceive that there may be such an Establishment as this (and who is able to prove that there cannot!) all Complaints against Providence, all Impeachments of the Gospel on this Head of Accusation, must cease? For what will you say? Man has had fair Warning of the Situation in which he stands. Eternal Happiness, and eternal Misery, are set before him. If he chuses the bad Part, he will find infinite Cause to condemn himself; but God will be justified, whom neither Justice nor Goodness can oblige to rescind his own Laws, and to alter a System, upon the whole wisely established, in favour of those who have wilfully refused to submit to the Measures of his Providence; any more than Civil Authority can be obliged to alter the Constitution of a Kingdom, wisely adapted to the general Good of the Community, to save particular Offenders from Punishment, how disproportionate soever upon some accounts such Punishment may  
be



be to any Advantage which the Offender may have received by his Disobedience.

*Conclusion.*

And this brings me to the Conclusion of the first Part of my Design, which was to shew the Credibility of the Gospel Revelation as to the subject Matter of it. I have shewn it, in respect of the Doctrine of the Fall and its Consequences—Of the Immortality of the Soul—Of the Resurrection of the Body—Of the Sacrifice of *Christ*, and—In respect of the Sanction of his Law; in all which Points it appears, that there are some things, the Depth of which human Reason cannot fathom, but nothing which human Reason can disprove. And this is all that I have to say, as to that great Mystery of all (the only Point of Consequence which I have not yet touched upon, and which lies at the Bottom of the whole Gospel System) the Doctrine of the INCARNATION of the Son of God, and of the TRINITY in UNITY. Each Person is spoken of in Scripture, as bearing his distinct Part in the Work of our Redemption. The *Father* as sending the Son to save us.

The

The Son as taking upon him our Nature, and offering himself as a voluntary Sacrifice for Sin. And the *Holy Ghost*, as undertaking the Guardianship and Protection of the Faithful, leading them into all Truth, and enabling them by his perpetual Presence to subdue Lust and Appetite, and to overcome the Temptations of the World. But *how* the divine Nature should unite itself to the human in the Person of *Christ*; or *how* THREE, as distinct in point of Agency as *Peter*, *James*, and *John* are distinct, should by one common Principle of Existence, be THE ONE ETERNAL GOD; this exceeds the Measure of our finite Understandings to comprehend. Yet it is not therefore a Contradiction. Yet it is not therefore incredible. For Contradictions appear by the Comparison of our Ideas in things that are known and understood, not in things to which our Ideas cannot reach, and where, of consequence, there can be no Comparison made.

Unbelievers are apt to think us entitled to their Contempt, when we hide ourselves (as they will call it) under the Cover of Mysteries.

steries. But is there any thing so becoming a human Creature, as to confess the narrow Limits of the human Understanding, of which Experience every Day gives us full and ample Conviction? God hath given to every Species of Beings, such Powers as are suited to the Rank in which he has placed them; and as there are Multitudes of things open to the Understandings of Men, that lie hid from the Understandings of Brutes; is it not as easy to be conceived, is it not as natural to be supposed, that there are also Multitudes of things hid from the Understandings of Men, that are open to the Understandings of superior Beings; and that in the one supreme, eternal, Mind, there may be Treasures of Wisdom which no created Being can look into? But "Why (say they) does God speak, "unless it be that he may be understood?" I answer; God does speak to be understood, and he is understood even when he speaketh Mysteries. We understand what the Mystery *says*; the *how* or the *why*, we do not understand. When we speak of the most common Effects of natural Causes we speak Mysteries. For all Nature

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ture is one great Myſtery. If I ſay, that Water is turned into a ſolid Body; that the Wind blows hot or cold; that the Loadſtone draws Iron, and the like, I declare Myſteries; for the Cauſes of theſe Effects the Underſtanding doth not reach; and yet you know what I mean. And you know as well what I mean when I ſay, that by the Sin of one Man Death entered into the World; that the Soul lives when the Body is diſſolved; that our Corruption ſhall put on Incorruption—and whatever elſe it be that Revelation teaches; though you underſtand not *why* or *how* theſe things are ſo. The Goſpel is a Declaration of *Facts*, relative to God and his moral Government, as our Senſes are the Reporters of *Facts*, which concern the Conſtitution of the material System; and it would be juſt as reaſonable to diſpute the Truth of our Senſes, becauſe we cannot explain all the various Appearances of Nature, as to deny what God reveals, becauſe you cannot explain the various Principles upon which the Oeconomy of Religion ſtands. What God reveals is as certain and inſallible as what our Senſes report;  
and



and therefore the only Question now is, Is the Gospel what it pretends to be, a Revelation from God? And upon this Point the Gospel is to be heard by its proper Evidence. *Sense* cannot judge of this, but *Reason* may; and if we cannot make it plain to Reason, that the Gospel is from God, we have no more to say. You may reject the Gospel, and ought to reject it, whether you *can* explain its Principles or whether you *cannot* explain them. But if the Evidence be good and sufficient; mere Difficulties raised upon Points in respect of which our Faculties may be too short, or many Prerequisites may be wanting, that are necessary to qualify us to judge rightly, are of no real Weight, nor can have any Weight with reasonable Men. “<sup>p</sup> It is (to use the Words of a very able Judge, and a diligent Enquirer into these things) “highly right, and the most pious Exercise of our Understanding, to enquire, “with due Reverence into the Ends and “Reasons of God’s Dispensations; yet “when those Reasons are *concealed*, to argue from our *Ignorance* that such Dis-

<sup>p</sup> *Analogy of Religion*, Part II. Chap. 5.

“ dispensations

“ penfations cannot be from God, is infinite-  
 “ ly absurd.—Let Reason be kept to, and if  
 “ any Part of the Scripture Account can be  
 “ fhewn to be *contrary* to it; let the Scrip-  
 “ ture, in the Name of God, be given up.  
 “ But let not fuch poor Creatures as we ob-  
 “ ject againft an infinite Scheme, that we  
 “ DO NOT SEE the Neceffity or Ufe-fulnefs  
 “ of all its Parts, and call this REASONING.”

*The End of the Firft Part.*



...of the Gospel is or is not  
possible. While  
of the  
Possibility  
of Reve-  
lation is  
general.

# CHRISTIANITY

...of the Gospel is or is not  
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lation is  
general.

## PART II.

The Evidence by which the Go-  
spel is proved to be a divine  
Revelation.

**T**H E Question being, While  
the Gospel is or is not  
possible, it is not  
possible to  
communicate himself to Mankind ought to  
be premised. And in order to this, it will  
be necessary to consider, in what Way

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# CHRISTIANITY

Justified upon the

Scripture Foundation.

PART II.

CONTAINING

The EVIDENCE by which the Gospel is proved to be a divine Revelation.

THE Question being, Whether the Gospel is or is not a divine Revelation ; some things concerning Revelation in general, and the Way or Manner in which it may be supposed possible for God to communicate himself to Mankind ought to be premised. And in order to this, it will be necessary to consider, in what Way our

*Of the Possibility of Revelation in general.*



*natural Knowledge comes; for this attended to, we shall the more readily perceive, how we may come at that Knowledge which is supernatural: And this is that which we mean by the Knowledge of Revelation.*

Our natural Knowledge of God comes not by any thing of him (*i. e.* of his Nature or Essence) that is perceptible by Sense, but by the *Effects* of his *Power*, which being by Sense (or otherwise) perceptible, Reason thence collects or concludes his Existence; as St. Paul states the Case, *Rom. i. 20. The invisible things of him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* And again, *Acts xvii. 27. That they should seek the Lord, even God that made the World and all things therein, if happily they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move, and have our Being.* In Nature, God is far removed from us all; but his *Works* are near at hand, and in them we may read and know him. God is a *Mind or Spirit,*  
and

and we know him in the same way that we know that there are other Minds or Spirits, besides our own; that is, not by any immediate Communication, but by their Effects upon the Instruments in which they reside, and which they animate and put into Motion. This visible World, with all that it contains, is as truly and properly the Organ of the eternal Mind which resides in it, and pervades it in every Part, as the human Body is the Organ of the human Mind; and as when I see the dull, passive Instrument moved, and directed with Aptness to some End, I conclude that there is a reasonable Soul, which gives it this Direction; so when I view the Fabrick of the Heaven and the Earth, and see every thing adjusted with Foresight and Contrivance, I conclude that there must be some intelligent Being, which directs the whole, and which is, as it were, the Soul of this immense Organ, which speaks its Power, Wisdom, and Goodness to all that have Hearts to understand.

And as by contemplating the Works of the Creation we know that God Is; so,

by considering the Situation in which we are placed, the Purposes we were made to serve, and by what Sort of Conduct those Ends will best be answered; we may likewise conclude, in many Points, concerning his WILL. Wisdom ever acts with a View to some wise End of acting, which by being proposed is understood to be the Will of the Agent; and there is no human Power or Faculty which has not its proper End, open and manifest to us as are the Powers and Faculties themselves. God has given us (for Instance) the Appetite to eat and to drink, and these Appetites we certainly know were intended for the Sustainance and Preservation of Life, not for its Destruction. This therefore opens to us the Duties of Temperance and Sobriety. Furthermore, he hath made us Creatures apt for Society, dependant upon each other, and needing each other's Assistance. This lays the Foundation for Justice and Charity, and all the social Virtues. Lastly, he hath given us Capacities to know him and the Works of his Providence, and to feel our Obligation to love, fear, and obey him, with strong, natural Presumptions of obtaining

taining his Favour if we behave well, and of incurring his Displeasure if we do not: All which is the Sum and Substance of what we term *Natural Religion*, as it results immediately from our *natural State*. And this is all the Religion that some Men would have; and they think that God can give no other; that is, they think it superfluous that he should make any other Manifestation of his Will, than what Reason, by contemplating upon the Works of his Providence, can discover. But it is very obvious to be understood, that though Natural Religion is and must be the *End* of all God's Manifestations of himself to Man, it may not be the *Measure* of them all; because Reasons may arise from the Conduct of Men, in consequence of the Freedom of their Natures, which may make farther Manifestations necessary. And this is what, we say, was, and what the Gospel supposes to have been the Case. For Man sinned

• *Omnis Religionis institutæ fundamentum, est Religio naturalis; a qua oriuntur et in quam refunduntur, ut fluvii in Oceanum, omnes Oeconomiae particulares a Deo constitutæ. Burnet De Stat. mort. & resurgent. Cap. x. p. 261.*



against his Maker, and thereby made it necessary that God should open to him a Method of Reconciliation, and prescribe Means that should be suitable to his fallen Condition. There is a wide Difference between a State of Perfection and a State of Sin; and to say, that the same Kind of Applications that are suitable to the one are suitable also to both, is as if you should say, that the same Regimen that is proper for a Man in Health, is as fit for him when he is sick, and over-run with Distempers.

They who think they can find a Method of Reconciliation for Sinners in the Natural Law, and that unassisted Reason is as good a Preservative against Vice and Corruption as the Gospel is; are at Liberty to shew it when they can. But this Objection has in the main been obviated in the former Part of this Work, and shall (God willing) be more distinctly spoken to in the Close of the whole. It is not at least so clear a Point, that it ought to stand as a Bar against any Evidence, that can be produced to shew that in fact God *has* made farther Manifestations of himself. Taking it then *ex*  
*Hypothesi,*

*Hypothesis*, that there may be Reasons why God should communicate his Will to us, in certain Points which do not result from our natural State; the Question is, in what way it may be conceived possible, that God may make such farther Manifestations. That in some way or other it is possible, there would be no Sense in disputing. For when the meanest among Men have the Power to communicate their Thoughts or Conceptions one to another, shall we deny this Power to the supreme Being, the Maker of us all? Let us consider then, if you please, how a Man opens his Mind to a Man, and we shall perceive, how God may reveal himself to a Man.

There are certain Points in which I know every Man's Mind, as infallibly as I know my own, by the most common and familiar Actions of his Life. As, that he desires Food and Raiment, with all other things that are necessary or convenient for him. That, he would be treated with Justice and Humanity, by those with whom he has to do; and that it will be displeasing and vexatious to him, to be hurt in his

Body

Body or in his Property. We all understand (I say) one another's Minds in such Points as these. The common Nature, and the common Pursuits of Mankind shew it. But if I would know a Man's Mind in any *particular Case*; as whether he is willing to give or to lend me a Sum of Money, or to pay me such or such a Price for my Goods; I cannot learn this from his general Conduct, but he must *speak*, or *write*, or do some *particular Act* whereby to inform me. In like manner, though (as has been observed) by considering the natural established Order of things, we may collect the Mind or Will of God, as to that kind of Behaviour which the natural established Order of things enforceth; yet in Points which do not fall within the Compass of natural Knowledge, the Will of God must be collected, not from the natural established Order of things, but by some *special Act* of his Power, distinguished from all *common and ordinary Effects*, and these Effects are those which we term *Miraculous*. Speech is a kind of Miracle in respect of the Power of Man; and a Miracle is as truly the Language of God, as the articulate Pronun-



Pronunciation of Words is the Language of a Man; and the Force and Virtue of each to open the Sentiments of the Mind, is to be resolved into the same Principles. For when a Man speaks to me, I consider the Motion of the Organ by which he speaks as under the Power and Direction of his Will; and when I understand what Ideas such or such Words express, his Veracity supposed, I know his Ideas, his Sentiments, his Determinations, *i. e.* I understand his Mind. In like manner I consider all miraculous Effects; that is, all Variations from the natural Order of things, as under the Direction of that infinite Mind by which the natural Order itself was at first established; and when I see the Purpose for which such Effects are produced, and what Ideas or Sentiments they are intended to raise in my Mind, I know the Will of God in that Point with much more Certainty than I know the Mind of Man by his speaking to me; because Man may deceive me, but God cannot deceive me. But because things of this sort will be best understood by Examples, I shall produce one great Example, that of *Moses* when he was  
sent



sent to bring the Children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*. I am not now concerned with the *Truth* of the History. But the Facts supposed as the History records, I will shew where the Force of them, to prove *Moses's* divine Mission, lies; and the Resolution of one Case, will be the Resolution of all other Cases of a like Nature.

The Introduction to this Story we have in the iii<sup>d</sup> Chapter of the Book of *Exodus*, where it is said, ver. 2. that *the Angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in a Flame of Fire, out of the midst of a Bush: And he looked, and behold the Bush burned with Fire, and the Bush was not consumed.* The thing extraordinary or miraculous, in this Appearance, was, that the Bush burned with Fire, and was not consumed. This was what drew *Moses's* Attention, and filled him with Wonder; not that the Bush was on Fire (for this might have happened by some common Accident) but that Fire, whose known Property it is to feed upon and destroy the Subject it occupies, should not consume the Bush, which appeared to him to be all on fire. *I will now* (says he)

turn

turn aside and see this great Sight, why the Bush is not burnt, ver. 3. Had the Matter ended here, Moses could have concluded nothing. He would have seen a strange unaccountable thing, and that is all. But what presently followed cleared up his Doubts. An audible, articulate Voice came out of the Bush that was on fire, conveying a distinct, intelligible Sense, in these Words, *I am the God of thy Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—I have seen the Affliction of my People which are in Egypt;—Come and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring them forth*, ver. 6—10. Here was a second Miracle added to the first: Language, human Language, when there was no human Creature present to utter it. We cannot form articulate Sounds without the proper Organs of Speech. But God, to whom all Nature serves as an Instrument, can; and God being supposed as the Author of the Miracle, Moses had the Evidence of God's Will, in the same way that we have the Evidence of a Man's Will, when we hear him speaking.

When

When God reveals himself by a Miracle, it is supposed that the Miracle conveys some intelligible Sense, as in this Case. For to reveal is to declare or discover something. A Miracle may be wrought which conveys no Meaning; and this would have been the Case here, if *Moses* had only seen the Bush on fire without being burnt, but had heard nothing, nor otherwise had been informed what it meant. But a Miracle without Meaning, is nothing more than Words without Meaning, or than Speech in a Language not understood. It informs us of nothing, and therefore is no Revelation. But though some Meaning is essential to Revelation, it is not necessary that this Meaning should be conveyed by articulate Sounds, or that the Miracle should strike upon the outward Senses. For God being intimate to the Mind of Man, can make such Impressions there by an immediate Act of his Power, as, by being clearly distinguishable from all its natural Motions and Operations, shall appear to be his Work, conveying to it such or such Ideas, and forming them into distinct Propositions, as

Voice and Language do. How this is done it is impossible for us to understand, but the Possibility of it is very easy to be conceived; and this we may suppose to have been the Case in *Dreams* and *Visions*, of which frequent mention is made in the Old Testament. But the Manner in which God is most frequently represented as discovering himself, is by Voices and outward Appearances. Of *Adam* it is said, that he *heard the Voice* of God, and that God *spoke* to him, Of *Abraham*, that God *appeared* to him, and *communed* with him. How he appeared it is not always said, but it is always to be supposed, that he appeared in a manner distinguishable from all common Appearances; and it is probable, that the *Voice* and the *Appearance* ordinarily accompanied each other, as they are represented to have done in the Case of *Moses*. It may seem perhaps difficult to understand, how God should have manifested himself to the first Man in his most early State, when, naturally, he could not have the Knowledge of Language, and when all Nature was to him new and surprizing. But as it is certain, that if God had never revealed himself



self to the first Pair, they would by Degrees have found out a Language for themselves; so there is as little room to doubt, but that he, by his Power, might supply to them that Knowledge in an Instant, which their Posterity were to come at gradually, by Use and Experience; and that the Symbols of the divine Presence might have been attended with such peculiar Circumstances of Majesty and Terror, as would convince them, that he who appeared and spake to them, could be nothing less than the Author of their Being.

But to return to *Moses's* Story. There were two things which God had to do. The first was to convince *Moses* himself, that it was He who spake to him; and this was the Use of the Miracles of the *burning Bush*, and the Voice that issued from thence; the other was to furnish proper Evidence, to convince the People that God had sent him; and this was not yet provided for. For had *Moses* gone immediately to the People, and only reported what he had seen and heard at the Bush, it is likely they would not have believed him.

*Moses*

Moses himself felt this Difficulty, and therefore said to God, *Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my Voice, for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee*, Chap. iv. ver. 1. And what follows immediately, shews him to have been in the right; for the Lord said unto him, *What is that in thine Hand? And he said, a Rod. And he said, Cast it on the Ground; and he cast it on the Ground, and it became a Serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine Hand, and take it by the Tail. And he put forth his Hand and caught it, and it became a Rod in his Hand.* THAT THEY MAY BELIEVE (says the Text) *that the Lord God of their Fathers—HATH APPEARED unto thee*, ver. 2—5. The Meaning is, that what he had now done in the Presence of God, that he should also perform in the Sight of his Brethren, who would by this, and such like Proofs, be convinced that God had sent him. So it follows, ver. 17. *And thou shalt take this Rod in thine Hand, wherewith thou shalt do Signs.* And at ver. 30, we read, that *Aaron spake all the Words which God had spoken to Moses, and*

did the Signs in the Sight of the People, and the People believed—and bowed the Head and worshipped. Aaron did the Signs, but it was at the Command of Moses, whose Rod he bore, and to whom God had made him his Spokesman to the People, as we see, ver. 14, 15.

The Truth of these Facts (as I have before said) supposed; let us now see how the Evidence arises, to prove to the People that Moses came to them by the Authority of God. And the first and principal thing to be attended to is, that the turning the Rod into a Serpent was not, properly speaking, the Act of Moses, but the Act of that superior Being, in whose Name Moses was sent, which superior Being is now supposed to be God. This is evident to common Sense. For Moses did no more than cast his Rod upon the Ground; and there is certainly no natural Connection between casting a Stick upon the Ground, and its becoming a Serpent. So when Moses put his Hand into his Bosom and it came out leprous; this Effect was not the Act of Moses, but the Act of God; there being nothing

at all in the Circumstance of a Man's putting his Hand into his Bosom, and taking it out again, as to its being leprous or not leprous. In both Cases, what *Moses* did was *introductive* of the Miracle; in neither of them the proper *efficient Cause*. And this is universally true of all Miracles, which, though in form of Language or Expression they are often given to Men as the *Authors* or *Workers*, because Men do some Act or other in consequence of which the Miracle follows, yet are indeed, and must be understood to be, the Work of some superior Power. And therefore, though God here says to *Moses*, *Thou shalt take this Rod in thine Hand, wherewith THOU SHALT DO Signs*; and though it is likewise said of *Aaron*, that HE DID the Signs in the Sight of the People; yet, in other Places, the Language runs with more strict Propriety, and God takes the Work to HIMSELF; as particularly Chap. iii. ver. 20. *I will stretch out MY Hand, and smite Egypt with all MY Wonders, which I WILL DO in the midst thereof*. Many Passages there are to the same Purpose, which every one will observe for himself in read-



ing this History, and which it would therefore be superfluous to set down.

This then being the Case, the Resolution will stand thus; that the *Israelites* were to believe that God had sent *Moses*, because when he came to them in his Name, and delivered a Message as from him, he, by his Hands, or in consequence of certain Acts by him performed, wrought Miracles in their Sight. If *Moses* had not come in the Name of God, to deliver some Message as from him, the Miracles would have had no Meaning. They could have proved nothing because there was nothing to be proved. If he had thrown down his Rod in their Sight, and it had become a Serpent; if he had put his Hand into his Bosom, and it had come out leprous; if he had smote the Waters, and they had been turned into Blood; if he had done these things, I say, and all that you read of besides, and SAID NOTHING; they would have wondered, they would have been astonished, but nothing could they have understood. But when there was a plain, intelligible Message, delivered as from God,

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the Miracles which followed, and which are supposed in the Argument to have been the Work or the Act of God, were the same Evidence to the *Israelites* that *Moses* was sent from God to deliver that Message, as what *Moses* saw and heard at the burning Bush was to him, that God spake to him. The single Difference between the two Cases is, that the Voice by which *Moses* received the Message, was miraculous; that by which the *Israelites* received it, was human. But this makes no Difference at all in the Evidence; it being to all Intents and Purposes the same thing, whether I speak my Mind myself, or by any significant Act or Token shew my Assent to what another Person says for me.

If you should think fit to ask, Where was the *Significancy* of the Miracle as a *Token*, to shew that God was consenting to the Message which *Moses* delivered; I answer, It lay in the *Connection* of the Miracle with the Message; of which no reasonable Account can be given, without supposing that it was intended to give Testimony to what *Moses* said. The Construction is

just the same, as when a Man sets his Hand and Seal to a Writing drawn up by a Scribe ; which nobody does, who does not mean to be understood as signifying thereby, that what the Writing contains is his Act and Deed. To what end could it serve, that God should turn a Rod into a Serpent ? Was it merely to raise Wonder in those who saw it ? If even this could be supposed ; yet why by the Intervention of *Moses* ? Why just at that Time, when he was pretending a Commission from him ? A Man may write his Name to shew his Skill in Writing ; or stamp his Seal upon Wax to shew the Art of the Engraver ; But he would not chuse to make such Experiments upon a Deed of Conveyance, when a piece of blank Paper would serve as well. Whatever kind or Species of Miracles you suppose, the Reasoning will be the same. Miracles are as various as are the Effects of natural Operations ; and instead of turning a Rod into a Serpent, *Moses* might, if God had so pleased, have raised a dead Man to Life, or restored a sick Man to immediate Health and Soundness, by the Word of Command ; Or he might have performed

some Wonder of the hurtful kind, as he afterwards did many, when *Pharaoh* flighted his Message, and refused to let the People go. In Cases of this sort it may be suggested (and it often has been suggested) that all that the Miracle shews is, that God intends some Hurt, or some Benefit, to the Persons concerned; but that nothing certain can be concluded as to God's Will in respect of any Doctrine which the Persons commissioned to work such Miracles shall deliver as from God. I make no question but God may work Miracles merely for the Benefit or for the Punishment of those who are the Subject of them; and, for ought we can tell, he doth it every Day. But if this is ALL, the Question will yet remain unanswered—Why by such or such Hands? Why by *Moses*, or *Christ*, or *Paul*, when there are a Variety of other Instruments before him? This Circumstance, I say; this Connection of the Miracle with the Men and their Pretensions, is not accounted for, nor can it be accounted for otherwise, than by supposing that the Miracle is intended to give Credit to such Pretensions, and to



make the Act or Declaration of Man equivalent to the Act or Declaration of God himself.

By the Help of the foregoing Observations, we may be able to give a short and satisfactory Answer to a common Objection, against the Evidence of Miracles to shew the Will of God, which is, That "a Man  
 "empowered to work Miracles, being naturally a free Agent, is at liberty to use  
 "such Power well or ill, by annexing it  
 "either to Truth or to Falshood, as he shall  
 "think fit." I do not think that any Argument will lie from what a Man may do in respect of his natural Powers, to what he may do in respect of supernatural Powers, if there are (properly speaking) any such Powers in Man. For the natural Powers of Man were given to answer the Ends of Providence in respect of Man's natural State; and these Ends not only will admit but do require, that he should be left to his natural Liberty to use such Powers well or ill, as he shall think fit. But the supernatural Power in question is understood to be given to answer a supernatural End, that  
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is, to declare the Mind or Will of God in Points which fall not within the Compass of natural Knowledge. And with this End it is manifestly inconsistent to suppose, that a Man endued with such Power should be left at Liberty to use it well or ill, to establish Truth or Falshood as he thinks fit. The natural and necessary Presumption in this Case is, either that God will not grant the Power of working Miracles to a Man who, he knew (and know he must) would abuse that Power; or else that he would immediately withdraw it, to his Shame and Confusion, whenever he should presume to declare any thing in his Name, which he had not given him in Commission to declare; in like manner as a sovereign Prince would certainly recall an Embassador who should exceed the Limits of the Powers granted him. But the short Answer is this. The Power of working Miracles is not a Power inherent in Man as his natural Powers are. Man does some natural Act upon which the Miracle is *attendant* (as Moses did when he threw his Rod upon the Ground) but the Miracle (as has been shewn) is the Work of a superior Being, which

which superior Being is now supposed to be God. The Question therefore is, not how MAN may use *his* Power, but how God will use *his*; and to say that God will use his Power to give Credit to a Lye, is great Madness and Impiety.

The Conclusion then is this, that when a Person, pretending a Commission from God, shall declare any thing in his Name, or as from him, and Miracles are wrought in support of such Pretensions; such Miracles (supposing them to be the Work of God) are Evidence of his Will as declared by such Person; and God does as truly reveal himself to and by such Person, as one Man reveals himself to another when he speaks, or writes, or does any other Act whereby his Will, Intention, or Determination is known or understood. How the Case will stand, when *intermediate* Beings are called into the Question, will be considered hereafter. At present I am only giving a general Idea how it may be possible for God to make known his Will to Mankind in Points, which fall not within the reach of natural Knowledge; in order to  
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prepare the Way to the Evidence for *Christ's* Mission, to which I now hasten.

As we took the Pretensions of *The Evidence of Christ* from his own Doctrines, as they are recorded in the New Testament by those who were

his first Disciples and Followers; it will be as reasonable to take the Evidence of his Mission also from himself; a general Account of which we have, *Matt. xi. 2—5.* where we read, that when John had heard in Prison the Works of Christ, he sent two of his Disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? To which Jesus answers; Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them.

Our first Remark must be upon the Baptist's Question, Art thou he that SHOULD COME? Which implies, that SOMEBODY WAS to come. For the under-

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standing of which we must observe, that the *Jews* had in their Hands the Books of the Old Testament, which they had received from their Fathers as the *Oracles of God*: And from these Books they had been taught to expect, that some great Prophet was to come, whom they called the *MESSIAH* or *CHRIST*. This Opinion was so common at the Time of our Saviour's Appearance, that it was in every one's Mouth. A poor Woman of *Samaria* could say, *I know that THE MESSIAS cometh, which is called CHRIST: When he is come he will tell us all things*, John iv. 25. And *Luke* iii. 15. we find all Men musing in their Hearts of *John*, whether he were *THE CHRIST* or no. This Character *Jesus* (in his Answer to the Woman) challenges to himself; *I that speak unto thee AM HE*, John iv. 26. It is in support of this Character, therefore, that he must be understood as appealing to the Books of the Old Testament, when he says to the *Jews*, John v. 39. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me; that is, which testify of me that I am THE CHRIST.*

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We see now the Meaning of the Baptist's Question, *Art thou he that should come?* That is, "Art thou the Christ?" "Art thou that great Prophet, which the Scriptures foretold; or, of whose Coming the Scriptures speak?" Our Saviour gives no direct Answer to the Question, but refers to the Evidence of his Mission, and leaves him to judge for himself; which is the same thing as if he had asserted his Character in the most express Terms. And what was the Evidence? This—the *Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached to them. To cure Diseases* (as Christ did) without the Use of natural Means; to *raise the Dead to Life*, to which no natural Means are equal; these are Works of the miraculous kind: *Miracles* therefore stand as one Part of the Evidence. But to *preach to the Poor*, hath nothing in it that is miraculous. This must be *descriptive*; that is, it must point at some Part of Christ's Character, which the Scriptures give as the Character of the Prophet that

that was to come; and by challenging to himself this one Part of the Character, he is to be understood as challenging the whole; which, in effect, he doth when he appeals to the Scriptures, as *testifying* of him. For the Scriptures could not *testify* of him, otherwise than by *foreshewing* what was *accomplished* in him. To the Evidence of Miracles, therefore, *Christ* adds the Concurrence of Prophecy: And necessary to the Evidence this Concurrence is; not because it is universally true, that Evidence from Miracles cannot be good, without the Concurrence of Prophecy: For Revelation must have a Beginning somewhere; and wherever it *begins*, it must stand upon Miracles singly. Prophecy, in the very Notion of it, is *prior* to the Event to be accomplished, or to every *Person* or *Thing* it *foreshews*; but no Revelation can be *prior* to the *first*: And therefore Evidence from Miracles there must be *somewhere*, in the Nature of it full and complete, abstracted from all Considerations of Prophecy. If Prophecy had said nothing of *Christ*, nor *Christ* appealed to the Prophets, he would not have wanted Prophecy to support his Mission.

Mission. Miracles might have been sufficient without it. But since the Scriptures did foretew a Prophet that was to come, and since *Jesus* claimed to be that Prophet; it is absolutely necessary that this Claim should be made good; otherwise his Mission cannot be established. And how is this Claim to be made good? Why, by the very Method which our Saviour prescribed to the *Jews*, and by no other; that is, by *searching* the Scriptures. We have the same Scriptures now that they had then; and what they do, or do not say concerning the Prophet which was to come, is a Question of Fact, of which our Sense and Reason qualifies us to judge, and which therefore cannot be decided by Miracles, but must be determined by its proper natural Evidence. Let us therefore consult the Old Testament, and see what Notices we can find there of a Prophet that was to come. I shall take this Matter up from the Beginning, and carry the Enquiry downward through every Age to the Conclusion of Prophecy.

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*Of the Evidence from Prophecy.*

The History of the Bible, from the Creation to the Flood, is exceeding short, and affords but one Prophecy to our Purpose, but that a very material one, and the Foundation of all the rest. It is contained in the Sentence which God passed upon the Serpent, immediately after the Fall; *And I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed, IT SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD, AND THOU SHALT BRUISE HIS HEEL, Gen. iii. 15.* When we come to the Times of *Abraham* we read, that God said unto him, *Get thee out of thy Country, and from thy Kindred; and from thy Father's House, unto a Land that I will shew thee, and I will make of thee a great Nation, &c. and IN THEE SHALL ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED, Chap. xii. 1—3.* The same Promise we find made to *Isaac*, Gen. xxvi. 4. *And in THY SEED shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* By which we perceive, that the Promise made to *Abraham* did not belong to him personally, but to his Seed; as it is here given not to *Isaac* personally,

personally, but to *his Seed*. I lay these two Prophecies together, because they throw Light the one upon the other. For if you understood the Promise, that the Seed of the Woman should *bruise the Serpent's Head*, to mean, that by her Seed Mankind should *gain a Victory* over the Serpent, in the Restoration of that Happiness to which they were created, and which was now lost by Transgression; you will have Reason to understand what was afterwards said to *Abraham*, that in him *all the Families of the Earth* (or, as it is expressed Chap. xviii. 18. *all the Nations of the Earth*) *should be blessed*, as conveying the same Promise. And, on the other hand, if you thus understand the Promise made to *Abraham*, it will be a Key to open to you the true Interpretation of the original Promise, made to the Woman's Seed in the Sentence denounced upon the Serpent: And hard, and, in truth, impossible it is to find any sound Sense for either of the Promises than this. To interpret the Expression of *bruising the Serpent's Head* merely in a literal Sense, and as it may be applicable to the brute Animal only, gives (as

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the learned <sup>b</sup> Author of the *Use of Prophecy* has observed) a Sense of no kind of Importance, and utterly disagreeable to the Solemnity of the Transaction then on foot. And how are we to understand this, that *Abraham* was to be a *Blessing to all the Nations of the Earth*? When God made him this Promise, he told him (as we have seen) that he would make of him a *great Nation*; and upon his second Appearance (of which we have an Account at the 7<sup>th</sup> Verse of the same Chapter) he promises to *give the Land of Canaan to his Seed*. But this did not make him a Blessing to all Nations; for what was the rest of the World the better for *Abraham's* temporal Greatness, or by his Posterity's inheriting the Land of *Canaan*? The Seed of *Abraham*, when they came to take Possession of *Canaan*, were a *Scourge* and a *Terror* to many Nations: To whom they were a *Blessing*, I cannot tell; but for certain they were not a Blessing to all the World; and yet all the World had an Interest in this Promise. But if you will call in the Help of an easy, significant Metaphor, and suppose the *bruising of the Serpent's Head by the Woman's Seed*

<sup>b</sup> Dr. Sherlock.

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to denote (as I have said) the *Victory* which the Woman's Seed should obtain over the Serpent; this will contain a Sense suitable to the Importance of the Subject, and proper to support the Hopes of our first Parents in their lost Condition. And if you suppose the same Promise conveyed to *Abraham* and his Seed; we shall easily see how he was a Blessing to all the Nations of the World: For as the Victory obtained by the Serpent over our first Parents was a *Curse* upon all their Posterity; so the Recovery of this Loss, by the Woman's Seed being victorious over HIM, must be a *Blessing* to all their Posterity.

\* It may be very fit to be observed here, that the *Reality* of this Prophecy hath no Dependance upon the *literal* Interpretation of the History of the Fall. You may think as you please of the precise Nature of *Adam's* Sin, and of the *Serpent*, and his Discourse with *Eve*; but the *Sentence of God*, which followed the Transgression, must be understood as shewing the *real Effects* of it. To *Adam* God says—*Cursed is the Ground*, &c.—To *Eve*—*In Sorrow shalt thou bring forth Children*, &c.—These are *real Punishments* which are seen and felt; and the History assigns the Cause of them. Now, for the same reason that the Sentence against the *Man* and *Woman* must be understood as declaring a *real Curse*; the Sentence against the *Serpent*, in which it is said that the *Woman's Seed* should



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This Promise made to *Abraham*, and then to *Isaac*, we afterwards find settled in *Jacob*, to whom God likewise says, *In thee and in thy Seed shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed*, Gen. xxviii. 14. This opens to us the Meaning of what his Father *Isaac* said to him, when he gave him his last Blessing; *Let the People serve thee, and Nations bow down to thee; be Lord over thy Brethren, and let thy Mother's Sons bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesteth thee*, Gen. xxvii. 29. The Scripture places this in a prophetic Light, and as a Prophecy we are to understand it. For *Isaac*, when he gave the Blessing, supposed that he had given it to *Esau*, and not to *Jacob*; and if he had meant only to express his own Hopes or Wishes, when he found out his Mistake, it is natural to think, he would have recalled it. But he felt (we are to suppose) the Power of God upon his Mind, and being sensible that God could not be deceived, and that his Purpose must stand, instead of *bruise his Head*, must be understood as declaring a *real Blessing*. The Question only is, what this *real Blessing* is; and if you take the Interpretation above; the Language (as I have said) will be *metaphorical*, but there will be no *Allegory*.

of recalling the Blessing, he most solemnly confirms it, *I have blessed him, YEA AND HE SHALL BE BLESSED*, ver. 33. It is visible that the Words,—*curst be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blest thee*, are the very Words which God spake to *Abraham*, when he made the original Promise, *Gen. xii. 3.* A very strong Presumption that *Jacob* was now put in *Abraham's* Place. And though *Isaac* does not say (what I find no where said but by God himself) *in thee shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*; he says what manifestly implies it: *Let People serve thee, and let Nations bow down to thee; be Lord over thy Brethren, and let thy Mother's Sons bow down to thee.* It will be shewn when we come lower down, that the *Messiah* is characterized as one who was to rule over all Nations; and the Promise of being a Blessing to all Nations is so considerable a thing, that wherever it passes it naturally gives the Pre-eminence; and where we find the Pre-eminence, there we are to look for the Promise. *Noah* gave it to *Shem* by giving him the Pre-eminence. *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his Servant*, *Gen. ix. 26.* Here God is styled emphatically,

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tically, or by way of Eminence, *the God of Shem*; and so he is afterwards styled, *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. But why the God of *Shem*, and not the God of *Japhet*? Or why the God of *Isaac*, and not the God of *Ismael*? Or why the God of *Jacob*, and not the God of *Esau*? Why this Distinction, I say, but because the Promise of that *Seed* which was to be a Blessing to all Nations, was limited to *them*, exclusive of the others? For in any other respect there was no Difference. This then serves to explain the Blessing afterwards given by *Jacob* himself to his Son *Judah*, in which the Promise is conveyed in like Terms, *Judah, thou art he whom thy Brethren shall praise; thy Hand shall be in the Neck of thine Enemies; thy Father's Children shall bow down before thee*, Gen. xlix. 8. God did not appear to *Judah* as he had done before to *Isaac*, and confirm to him the Promise, that in him all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed; for this Method of Communication with the several Heads of Families, which was carried on during the Time of their sojourning in the Land of *Canaan*, ceased when they went down into *Egypt*,  
and

and God spake to them no otherwise than by his Prophets. In this Quality we consider *Jacob*, and *Joseph*; the latter of which prophesied (as the former also had done) of the Return of the *Israelites* back to *Canaan*, but says nothing of the Promise of the Blessing to all Nations. Here therefore we must leave that Promise to rest upon the Head of *Judah*, till we come down to the Time of *Moses*; for from hence, during their whole Stay in *Egypt*, Revelation was suspended. Whether that Seed by which the Blessing was to come, was one or more, the foregoing Prophecies do not say. But we shall find Reason enough hereafter to fix it in ONE PERSON, and I think that *Jacob* has so fixed it in the latter Part of his Prophecy, *the Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until SHILOH come, and unto him shall the Gathering of the People be*, Gen. xlix. 10.

In interpreting the foregoing Prophecies I have followed the Sense of the learned Writer before-mentioned, to whom I must refer those who desire farther Satisfaction. But if this is right, it is clear that Prophecy thus far bears Testimony to *Jesus*



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*Christ*, who has taken upon himself the very Character that Prophecy gives to the Seed that was to come, viz. *the bruising the Serpent's Head*, the *triumphing over Death* by raising us from the Dead, and *restoring* to the whole human Race the Blessing of *eternal Life*, that was forfeited by Transgression.—To go on therefore with our Enquiry. The next Prophet that appeared after the Death of *Joseph* was *Moses*. But he was not THAT SEED in whom all the Nations of the Earth were to be blessed, but the Minister of that Part of the Covenant in which God had promised to give the Land of *Canaan* to *Abraham's* Posterity, as appears from the Account himself gives of his own Mission, in the third Chapter of the Book of *Exodus*. *I have surely seen the Affliction of my People that are in Egypt—and am come down to deliver them—and to bring them up out of that Land—unto the Place of the Canaanites and the Hittites, &c.—Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, ver. 7—10.* This was the End of *Moses's* Mission, and to this End his Law had relation. But as *Christ* hath told us, that he came not to DESTROY the Law, or the Prophets, but to

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**P**OLFRID *them* (Matt. v. 17.) it is necessary, in order to justify his Appeal to the Old Testament, to shew that his Establishment corresponds with what the Law and the Prophets have set forth. And this will carry us to consider a little more distinctly what was the Nature and Constitution of *Moses's* Law, and what the Prophets have spoken concerning it; which I shall do before I proceed any farther in the general View of Prophecy.

When the *Israelites* went down into *Egypt*, they were the Worshippers of the one true God, the Lord *Jehovah*, and of him only. This Worship was not lost during their Stay in *Egypt*, but much corrupted by the idolatrous Worship of the *Egyptians*. *Joshua* expressly charges it upon them, that their *Fathers served* [other] *Gods in EGYPT*, *Josh. xxiv. 14.* *Ezekiel* gives the same Account, Chap. xx. 8. and xxiii. 3. 8. And *Moses* supposes it when he says, *They shall no more offer their Sacrifices unto Devils, after whom they have gone a whoring*, *Levit. xvii. 7.* This then having been the Case, that they were even now corrupted by Idolatry, and in danger of being more so by mixing with the idolatrous

trous Nations, whom they were going to dispossess; some strong Remedy was necessary to purge them from this Corruption, and to preserve them from future Mischief. To this Purpose the Law was given, to make them God's own *Peculiar*, a Nation *separated*, by Rites and Ordinances of his own Appointment, from every Nation under Heaven. This appears from those Words of *Moses*, which stand at the Foot of the whole Catalogue of the ceremonial and political Laws of the *Jews*, Deut. xxvi. 16—19. where he says, *The Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these Statutes and Judgments—Thou hast avouched the Lord this Day to be THY GOD—and the Lord hath avouched thee this Day to be HIS PECULIAR PEOPLE—that thou mayest be an HOLY PEOPLE unto the Lord thy God.* Accordingly the Law forbids all Communion with the idolatrous Nations, whom they were commanded to destroy, but they were to make *no Covenant* with them, neither *make Marriages with them; thy Daughter thou shalt not give unto his Son, nor his Daughter shalt thou take unto thy Son; for they will turn away thy Son from following me, that they may serve other Gods*

*Gods—But thus shall ye deal with them. Ye shall destroy their Altars and break down their Images, &c.—for thou art an HOLY PEOPLE unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a SPECIAL PEOPLE unto himself, above all People that are upon the Face of the Earth. Deut. vii. 1—7.*

The Law of Moses then having been appointed as an Instrument, whereby to separate the Israelites from all other Nations; one thing is very plain, which is, that it could never have been intended as the Law by which all Mankind must be saved. It is farther manifest, that this Law being relative to the intended Separation of the Israelites from other Nations, and appointed for its sake, it must be understood as expiring of course, when that Separation was to have an End. And that this Separation was not always to last, Prophecy is clear and express. For Malachi says, *From the Rising of the Sun even unto the Going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the GENTILES, and in EVERY PLACE Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name shall be great among the HEATHEN, saith the Lord of Hosts,*



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*Hosts*, Mal. i. 11. The Jews were God's *Peculiar*, as they were separated from all other Nations to the Profession of his true Religion and Worship. Wherefore, when all Nations were to be called to the Profession of God's true Religion, *Separation* and *Peculiarity* could no longer stand; and such a State of things this Prophecy foreshews. For whereas by the *Jewish* Law their Offerings and Sacrifices were appointed to be brought to *one* Place, viz. the Tabernacle, or the Temple; it is here said, that in *every* Place Incense should be offered unto God's Name; meaning, not the *material* Incense, but the Incense of the *Heart*, which is here called a *pure Offering*. Accordingly we may observe, that *Prophecy* speaks of *another* Covenant that was to come, *different* from that which was made at Mount Sinai. Behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a NEW Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah, NOT ACCORDING TO the Covenant which I made with their Fathers, when I took them by the Hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt—But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel—I will put my Law in their in-ward

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*ward Parts, and write it in their Hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my People—for I will forgive their Iniquity, and I will remember their Sin no more, Jer. xxxi. 31—35.* The Difference between this new Covenant and that which was given by *Moses*, can hardly be mistaken. It was not a Law of external Rites, as *Moses's* Law was; but a Law of inward Purity and Holiness. It was not a Covenant for carnal Purification, or Remission as to legal Purposes or Effects; but it was a Covenant of full and perfect Reconciliation, which *Moses's* Law was not. Add to this, that Prophecy expressly foreshews the Cessation of the *Mosaic* Law. The Ark of the Covenant was the Center of the *Jewish* Worship; yet *Jeremy* foretells the Absence and utter Abolition of it. *In those Days they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done any more, Jer. iii. 16.* *Daniel* foretells the Cessation of the Sacrifice and the Oblation, Chap. ix. ver. 27. and *David* the Change of the *Levitical* Priesthood; for he speaks of a Priest that was to arise, not according to the  
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the Order of *Aaron*, but after the Order of *Melchisedeck*, *Psal. cx. 4.*

This Point will be farther cleared when we come to open the Character of the *Messiah* as described by the Prophets. In the mean time, the Correspondence of all this with *Christ's* Pretensions is most plain and visible; who offered himself as the Minister of the Law of Righteousness, and the Covenant of Reconciliation; and declared the whole Law of *Moses* as concluded in himself. *The Hour cometh* (says he to the Woman of *Samarita*) *when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father*; that is, when the true Worship of God shall not be confined to this or that particular Place or Country, but extended to all Places alike, as the following Verse shews. *The Hour cometh and now is, when the true Worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him, John iv. 21. 23.* If all are true *Worshippers* of God who *worship him in Spirit and in Truth*, it will follow, that the true Worship can have nothing farther to do with the Law or its Appointments;

pointments; but all such true Worshippers must be accepted, of whatever Place or Country they be. And this is what St. Peter expressly asserts, *Acts* x. 34. *God is no Respector of Persons, but in EVERY NATION he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness, is accepted.* How exactly does this agree with what I have just now cited from the Prophet *Malachi*, *In EVERY Place Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering!* How perfectly does the Covenant established by *Christ* correspond with *Jeremiah's* new Covenant; *I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts!* Thus hath *Christ* (supposing him authorized of God to be the Publisher of this new Covenant) fulfilled the Law. But it cannot be said that he *destroyed* it; any more than it can be said of any Person, that he destroys a *Garment* that is worn out and unfit for Use; or that he destroys a *House* when it falls down by its own Weight.

And now we will go on with the History of Prophecy, to see how it corresponds with the Supposition, that he was the Person appointed



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pointed by God to introduce this new Covenant. That a great Prophet was to arise after *Moses*, he himself bears witness. For thus God speaks to him, *Deut. xviii. 18, 19. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and whosoever will not hearken unto my Words which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.* This Prophet, we see, was to be one of their Brethren: Therefore of the Seed of *Jacob*, in whom the Blessing of *Abraham* rested, as has been shewn above; and from whose Family, *Balaam* about the same time prophesied, that a *Star* and a *Scepter* should arise; or (as it is expressed a Verse or two after) one that should have *Domination*. From this time we hear no more of the Promise, till after the Settlement of the *Israelites* in the Land of *Canaan*, and the kingly Government was set up, when we find an everlasting Kingdom established in the Family of *David*: For thus God speaks to him by the Prophet *Nathan*; *When thy Days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy Fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee which shall proceed out of thy Bowels,*

Bowels, and I will establish his Kingdom—FOR EVER. 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13. It will be remembered, that among the Sons of Jacob, Judah (from whom David sprang) had the Pre-eminence; this therefore was confirming the Promise to Judah. And that David understood it in this Sense, is clear from what we meet with 1 Chron. xxviii. 4, 5. where, referring to this Promise made to him by Nathan, he says; *The Lord God of Israel chose me before all the House of my Father, to be King over Israel FOR EVER: For he hath chosen Judah to be THE RULER, and of the House of Judah the House of my Father; and among the Sons of my Father he liked ME to make me King over all Israel; and of all my Sons he hath chosen Solomon my Son to sit upon the Throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over Israel.* This Passage has a manifest Reference to the Promise made to Judah, Gen. xlix. v. 8. *Judah, thou art he whom thy Brethren shall praise; thy Hand shall be in the Neck of thine Enemies; thy Father's Children shall bow down before thee;* and it is plain that David here considers this Preference given to Judah, as the Reason why God chose him

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and his Son *Solomon* to be Ruler over *Israel*; which was challenging to be *Judah's* Heir in respect of this Promise. But this Promise (as has been shewn above) comprehends the Promise of that Seed which was to be a Blessing to all Nations; which is indeed the principal Part of it; for as to the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*, all the Sons of *Jacob* had a Share in it, although the rest were to submit, and did now submit, to *Judah*, as Subjects to their temporal King. It is necessary therefore to understand that the Kingdom of the Redeemer was now settled in the Family of *David*; and this will best agree with the Style and Title of an everlasting Kingdom, which is here and in other Places given to it. The temporal Kingdom of *David* was but of short Continuance when compared with many other Kingdoms in point of Duration, and has long ago had its Period. But his spiritual Kingdom, or the Kingdom of the Redeemer, knows no Period: For it shall continue to the End and Consummation of all things.

But



But of what Nature the Kingdom established in *David* was, we shall best learn by laying together some other Passages of Scripture which relate to the same Subject. If we look into the Context we shall find, that *David's* Intention to build an House for the Habitation of the God of *Jacob* occasioned this Promise by *Nathan*. But this Work, by the exprefs Appointment of God, was reserved for *Solomon*, who, when he brought up the Ark into the Temple which he had built, thus addresses himself to God; *Arise, O Lord, into thy Rest, thou and the Ark of thy Strength.—For thy Servant David's Sake turn not away the Face of thine Anointed. The Lord hath sworn in Truth unto David, he will not turn from it. Of the Fruit of thy Body will I set upon thy Throne.—For the Lord hath chosen *Zion*, he hath desired it for his Habitation. This is my Rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.—There will I make the Horn of *David* to bud, I have ordained a LAMP for mine ANOINTED, Psal. xxxii. 8, & seq. There is no Passage in *David's* Life, but the Promise made to him by *Na-**



than, which contains any such Oath as is here mentioned. This therefore must be the Passage referred to. And what does Solomon expect in consequence of this Promise? Why, that a great Prince should arise in after times, whom he styles the ANOINTED, i. e. the MESSIAH, and a Bud from the Horn of David. I say, in after times was this great Person to come; for the Language runs in the future Tense, *There WILL I make the Horn of David to bud.* To strengthen this Interpretation let it be observed, that the same Person is spoken of both by *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*, under the Title of the BRANCH, which we know is only a Bud expanded to its full natural Growth. *Isaiah* prophesied above a hundred Years after the Death of Solomon; and he, speaking yet of times to come, says, *There shall come forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a BRANCH shall grow out of his Roots, and the SPIRIT OF THE LORD shall rest upon him—with Righteousness shall he judge the Poor, and reprove with Equity for the Meek of the Earth; and he shall smite the Earth with the Rod of his Mouth, and with the Breath of his Lips shall he slay the*

the Wicked. Isaiah xi. 1—5. And a little lower in the same Chapter, *In that Day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an Ensign of the People; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his Rest shall be glorious.* Again, Chap. ix. ver. 6, 7. *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the Government shall be upon his Shoulder; and his Name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father [or the Father of the Age] The Prince of Peace. Of the Increase of his Government and Peace there shall be no End, upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with Judgment and with Justice from henceforth even for ever.* Once more, Chap. lv. ver. 3, 4, 5. *I will make an EVERLASTING Covenant with you, even the SURE MERCIES of David. Behold I have given him [i. e. the Heir of this Promise] for a Witness to the People; a Leader and Commander to the People. Behold, thou shalt call a Nation that thou knowest not, and Nations that knew not thee, shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the holy One of Israel.* Now hear what Jeremiah says,

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who prophesied yet later than *Isaiah*. *Behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous BRANCH, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth; and this is his Name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.*

There is no one who reads these Passages, who will not perceive, that they all relate to one and the same Person, to wit, the BRANCH that was to spring from *David*, and to be the Heir of the everlasting Kingdom: And from the several Particulars here mentioned we may be able to fix his Character. For 1. He was to be a *Prophet* as well as King. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.* And in this the Character agrees with what God said to *Moses*, *I will raise them up a PROPHET from among their Brethren, &c.* 2. He was to be OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, i. e. he was to work for us Peace and Reconciliation with God; a Character by much too great for any mere temporal Prince, and which suits THAT SEED only which was to bruise the Serpent's



*Serpent's Head.* 3. He was to be the Author of a new Covenant, by which both Jews and Gentiles should become the People of God. He shall stand for an Ensign of the People, to it shall the GENTILES seek—thou shalt call a Nation that thou knowest not, and Nations that knew not thee, shall turn unto thee. I will give thee (says the same, *Isaiab Chap. xlix. ver. 6.*) for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be MY SALVATION unto the End of the Earth. And this again agrees with the Promise made to *Abraham*, In thee shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed.

It was in virtue of these Promises, that it became so fixed a Point among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, that no one called it in question, that the Messiah was to be of *David's Race*; and those who received *Jesus* as the Messiah, received him as the BRANCH promised to *David*, as appears from *Zechariah's Prophecy* upon the Circumcision of *John the Baptist*, *Luke i. 68, 69. 78.* Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his People;



ple; and hath raised up an Horn of Salvation for us in the House of his Servant David, as he spake by the Mouth of his holy Prophets, which have been since the World began—to give Knowledge of Salvation unto his People, through the Remission of their Sins; through the tender Mercy of our God, whereby the Day-spring from on high [or the BRANCH] hath visited us, to give Light to them that sit in Darkness and in the Shadow of Death, to guide our Feet into the Way of Peace. This prophetic Speech contains the principal Characters of David's BRANCH, as given by the old Prophets, viz. his being to us the Author of Redemption and Salvation, and his speaking Peace, and giving Light to the Gentile World; to shew us how exactly the Spirit of Prophecy agreed with itself, both in the earlier and later times of the Jewish Church.—But let us return again to the ancient Prophets, and see what can be gathered farther to strengthen our Saviour's Pretensions to be the Person foretold by Prophecy.

*Daniel*

*Daniel* was cotemporary with *Jeremiah*, and prophesied at the time of the *Babylonish Captivity*. He speaks of a *MESSIAH* yet to come, who was to make *RECONCILIATION for Iniquity, and bring in EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS*; who was to confirm the *Covenant*, and cause the *Sacrifice and the Oblation* (i. e. the *Jewish Sacrifices*, with that whole *Oecconomy* which depended upon them) to cease; and thereby break down that *Wall of Partition* which stood between *Jew* and *Gentile*, to make of both one People, *Dan. ix. 24.* After the Return of the *Jews* from the Captivity, *Zechariah* prophesies of a *King of Jerusalem*, who was to come, just and *HAVING SALVATION*, who should speak *Peace unto the Heathen*; whose *Dominion* should be—unto the *Ends of the Earth*, *Zech. ix. 9, 10.* After him *Haggai* foretells one to come, whom he styles *THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS*, *Hag. ii. 6.* And lastly *Malachi*, of one whom he styles *THE LORD WHOM YE SEEK*, and

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THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT whom ye delight in, who was to purify the Sons of Levi, that they might offer unto the Lord an Offering IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, *Mal. iii. 1, &c.* Of what Covenant does *Malachi* speak? Not of the temporal Covenant, the Minister of which was already come, and had been dead many Ages before. He must mean therefore the *Spiritual* Covenant; that Covenant of which *Jeremy* speaks, Chap. xxxi. 31. as above cited: *Behold, the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah, not according to the Covenant which I made with their Fathers, when I took them by the Hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt. And observe how the Description of this Covenant agrees, as set down by both Prophets. Jeremy says—I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts, and will be their God and they shall be my People; for I will forgive their Iniquity, &c.* which is the same thing, in other Words, with what *Malachi* says—*He shall purify*

*purify the Sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteousness; for they only can offer unto the Lord such an Offering, in whole Hearts God writes his Law, and whose Sins and Iniquities he no more remembers. And who but the Messenger of this Covenant should be Haggai's Desire of all Nations? Who but he that should speak Peace unto the Heathen, in the Language of Zachary? Who but he could be Daniel's MESSIAH? If Malachi's MESSENGER had a Covenant to establish; so had Daniel's MESSIAH; and the Covenant was one and the same; for it was to finish Transgression, to make an End of Sin, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness. The Unity of Character that runs through all these Prophecies, shews that the same Person was intended in all; and the History of Jesus Christ, recorded to us in the New Testament, shews as plainly their Accomplishment in HIM.*

Nor is Prophecy less clear in fixing both the Place where this great Person was to be



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be born—the *Time* of his Coming, and—the particular *Method* by which he was to work our Salvation. As to the first, the *Place* of his Nativity, *Micah* says, *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judea, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me [He] that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose Goings forth have been of old, from everlasting, Mic. v. 2.* That is to say, “Thou Bethlehem, though in point of civil Rank and Dignity thou art small, and of no Reputation; yet shall this Defect hereafter be abundantly supplied, by the Honour thou shalt have of giving birth to one that is to be Ruler in Israel,” &c. Of whom does the Prophet speak? Some say of *Zorobabel*. But (other Reasons omitted) there were other Rulers as great or greater than he; and how comes it to pass that HE alone should be thought of among all the rest as doing such eminent Honour to the Place of his Nativity? Lastly, the following Characters will not agree—*Whose Goings forth have been of old, from everlasting*  
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ing—and he shall be great unto the Ends of the Earth, ver. 4. Which way soever you understand the Phrase, *whose Goings forth have been of old*, &c. whether that the Original of his Being was from everlasting, or that he was foretold from of old, from the Beginning of the World; the Description will in no sort suit Zorobabel; nor was he ever great unto the Ends of the Earth, as it is here foretold this Ruler should be. But if you apply the whole to the *Messiah*, the *righteous Branch of David*, the *Messenger of the Covenant* (whose future Coming this very Prophet, as we have seen elsewhere, foreshews) all will be easy, and it will evidently appear how exactly this Prophecy was accomplished in *Christ*. Which Accomplishment is so much the more remarkable, as it seems to have been owing to a particular Designation of Providence. For, as we all well remember, our Saviour's Parents did not dwell at *Bethleem*, but at *Nazareth*; from whence as they were travelling through *Bethleem* upon an extraordinary Occasion, *Jesus* was there born.

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The Time when this great Person was to appear, is a very material Circumstance to be considered; and this is plainly settled by Prophecy. *Haggai* and *Malachi* have both foretold that he should appear in the second Temple. For thus the former; *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the Heavens, and the Earth, and the Sea, and the dry Land; and I will shake all Nations, and THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME, and I will fill this House with Glory, saith the Lord.—The Glory of this latter House shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts, Hag. ii. 6, &c.* The Jews were now rebuilding their Temple, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians when they were carried into Captivity. But this Temple fell so far short of the first Temple that was built by *Solomon*, in point of Magnificence of Structure and Richness of Ornaments, that, as we read *Exra iii. 12.* many of the Priests and Levites, and chief of the Fathers who were ancient Men, that had seen the first House, when the Foundation of this House was laid before

before their Eyes, wept with a loud Voice. And this Circumstance Haggai takes notice of as the Introduction to his Prophecy: *Who is left among you that saw this House in her first Glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your Eyes in comparison of it, as nothing?* Y 3. To comfort them therefore he tells them, that, this notwithstanding, this second Temple should be more glorious than the first; and this being immediately connected to the Promise, that *the Desire of all Nations* (whom we have proved to be the *Messiah*) *shall come*, it shows plainly the Sense to be, that he, by his Presence in this House, should derive upon it this greater Glory above the former Temple, to which, in itself, it was far inferior. It is an Address exactly of the same kind with that which was offered in respect of the Place of our Saviour's Nativity, and just now mentioned; *But thou Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth he that is to be Ruler in Israel.* But what Haggai's Words imply, that Malachi expressly asserts. THE LORD WHOM



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YE SEEK, shall suddenly COME INTO HIS TEMPLE, even THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. Mal. iii. 1. But Daniel is yet more precise; Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City; to finish the Transgression, to seal up Sins, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and understand, that FROM the going forth of the Commandment to build Jerusalem again UNTO Messiah the Prince, shall be seven Weeks, and threescore and two Weeks. The whole Period of this Prophecy comprehends seventy Weeks, computing from the going forth of the Commandment to build Jerusalem. But from this Date unto the Messiah there was to be but seven Weeks, and threescore and two Weeks, that is, sixty nine Weeks. The Question is, what the Prophet means by Weeks. He does not mean Weeks of Days; for within this Period nothing can be assigned which will at all answer to the Matters

Matters contained in this Prophecy. But the *Jews* had another sort of Week by which they reckoned, and that was a Week of Years. This is evident from *Levit. xxv. 8.* *And thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of Years unto thee, seven times seven Years; and the Space of the seven Sabbaths of Years shall be unto thee forty and nine Years.* It is thus that the *Jews* were taught to compute their Jubile; and thus that *Daniel* computes the great Jubile of all, the Coming of the Messiah. Sixty nine of these Weeks make a Period of 483 Years; and if you reckon from the 7<sup>th</sup> of *Artaxerxes* the *Persian* King, when he sent down *Ezra*, by a Decree, to restore and re-establish the *Jewish* State, it will be found just so many Years to the Beginning of *John* the Baptist's preaching, who opened the Kingdom of the Messiah. There are other ways of reckoning this; but I think it sufficient to mention one, for they all come at last to the same Conclusion. The Prophecy says, that after sixty nine Weeks were completed, the Messiah should confirm the Covenant with many for one Week. This one Week includes the whole

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Period of the Baptist's and our Saviour's Preaching, to the time of his Death, which was just seven Years ; and with this the *seventy Weeks* were completed. But it should be observed, what the Prophet foretells should happen after the seventy Weeks were ended, and this was the utter Dissolution of the *Jewish Commonwealth*, before which Event *Jacob's Prophecy* assures us, that *Shiloh* was to come. *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until Shiloh come,* Gen. xlix. 10. Till Christ came *Judah* had his Scepter and his Lawgiver ; which departed from him soon after, when, according to *Daniel's Prediction*, their Polity was dissolved by the *Roman Power*, and their City and their Temple laid in Ashes. *The People of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary, and the End thereof shall be with a Flood, and unto the End of the War Desolations are determined.* Dan. ix. 29.

Lastly, the particular *Method* by which the Messiah should accomplish his Work, Prophecy foreshews, should be by offering himself

himself up as a SACRIFICE for Sin. *Daniel* is express that the Messiah was to be cut off, not for himself, but to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, *Dan. ix. 24. 26.* which agrees with what *Isaiah* says of one whom he styles the SERVANT of the Lord, *Chap. liii. ver. 4, 5, 6.* Surely he hath born our Grievs and carried our Sorrows—He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities, the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed. All we like Sheep have gone astray—and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all. Again, *ver. 10, 11.* When thou shalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin—shall my righteous Servant justify many, for he shall bear their Iniquities. Of whom (may I ask again) does the Prophet speak? His Characters will shew him. It was he who was to grow up as a tender Plant, and as a Root out of a dry Ground, *ver. 2.* It was he who was to sprinkle many Nations, and at whom Kings should shut their Mouths, *Chap. lii. ver. 15.* It was he whose Goings forth have been of old, from everlasting; for who shall declare his Generation? *Chap.*



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liii. ver. 8. It was he who was to have a *Portion with the Great, and divide the Spoil with the Strong*, ver. 12. In fine, it is THAT Servant of God who is spoken of by the same Prophet, Chap. xlii. 1—4. *Behold my Servant whom I uphold; mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth, he shall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles—He shall not fail till he hath set Judgment in the Earth, and the Isles shall wait for his Law. I will give thee for a COVENANT to the People, for a LIGHT to the Gentiles.* But these are the Characters of *David's BRANCH*, the Heir of the *everlasting Kingdom*, as exhibited in the *Old Testament*; these the Characters of *JESUS CHRIST*, as exemplified in the *New*.

I might mention, that there is scarce a remarkable Action, or Circumstance of our Saviour's Life, which is not pointed out by Prophecy. His Birth of a *Virgin* was foretold by *Isaiab*, Chap. vii. 14. His Riding into *Jerusalem* upon an *Ass*, by *Zechariah*, Chap. ix. ver. 9. His being sold for *thirty Pieces of Silver*, by the same Prophet, Chap. xi. ver. 12. That he should

be

he scourged, buffeted, and spit upon, by *Isaiah*, Chap. l. ver. 6. The piercing his Hands and his Feet, by the *Psalmist*, *Psal.* xxii. 16. The giving him Gall to eat and Vinegar to drink, by the same Writer, *Psal.* lxix. 21. His meek and patient Suffering under all these Indignities, by *Isaiah*, Chap. xlii. ver. 2, 3. and Chap. l. 6. and Chap. liii. 7. The casting Lots upon his Garment, by the *Psalmist*, *Psal.* xxii. 18. It is to be confessed, that several of these Prophecies now referred to had, in their primary Intention, respect to some nearer Events in which they received their Completion. But they are not for that to be rejected, as not foreshewing *Jesus Christ*. For when it is considered, that the Prophets under the Law were so far Ministers of the new and better Covenant, as to foreshew its future Accomplishment (of which the many Prophecies already produced, and which speak of the Messiah and of him ONLY, is undeniable Proof) it is not at all unreasonable to be supposed, that the Spirit by which these Prophets were directed, should, in similar Matters, have had the more distant as well as the nearer Events in

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view, and have made use of such Expressions as are descriptive of both; and there is the highest Probability that this was the case, when ever Prophecies run in such Terms, as are more strictly and literally applicable to the more distant Event than to the nearer, in which they are supposed to have had their *primary* Completion. Thus when *Isaiab* says, *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name IMMANUEL*; though the first Intention of this Prophecy was to shew, that a Son should be born to the Prophet of a Woman, who was a Virgin at the time when the Prophecy was given, and this to be a *Sign* to the House of *David*, that GOD would be WITH THEM, and speedily deliver them from the Hands of *Rezin* King of *Syria*, and *Pekab* King of *Israel*, who had combined together for their Destruction; yet when we see the Son of *David* himself, the Heir of the everlasting Covenant, who is in the most complete Sense IMMANUEL, or GOD WITH US, born of a Woman who had not known Man (which is literally and properly to be born of a Virgin) one can scarce help concluding,

cluding, that this Event was not only intended, but the thing *principally* intended, by the Spirit of Prophecy. Again; when the Psalmist says, *All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the Lip, and shake the Head, saying, He trusted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him seeing he delighted in him—they pierced my Hands and my Feet—they gave me Gall for my Meat, and when I was thirsty they gave me Vinegar to drink—they part my Garment among them, and cast Lots upon my Vesture*; what can we think of it? It does not appear from any part of *David's* History, that HE suffered such things, but *Christ*, we know, did. You will say, perhaps, that these are but figurative Expressions, importing great Indignities and Calamities. Be it so. But how came *David* to chuse such Figures, among the great Variety that might possibly have occurred to his Mind, as *literally* express what *Christ* afterwards suffered? Did this happen by chance? You will be the less disposed to think so when you consider, that *David* is treated in Scripture as the *Representative* of *Christ*, and *that* is said of *Da-*



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vid which could not be true of David, but was verified in Christ. Thus, *Hos. iii. 5.* In the latter Days Israel shall return and seek David their King. *Jer. xxx. 9.* They shall serve the Lord and David their King, whom I will raise up unto them. *Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.* I will set one Shepherd over them, even my Servant David—and David shall be a Prince over them. All these Prophets lived long after David; and therefore in all these Places the Word David must mean the Messiah, who was yet to spring from David. Now if David means Christ; why may not the Sufferings of David mean the Sufferings of Christ? Or if other Prophets spake of Christ in the Person of David; why might not David speak of Christ in his own Person? This Observation will justify the Application of many Passages in the Book of Psalms to Christ's History, and in particular that famous Passage in the xvth Psalm, ver. 9, 10. which the Writers of the New Testament have treated as a Prophecy of Christ's Resurrection: *Therefore my Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth; my Flesh also shall rest in Hope. For thou wilt not leave my Soul*  
in

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in Hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see Corruption. Upon which Words St. Peter thus reasons, Acts ii. 29, 30, 31. Men and Brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this Day; therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne; he seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection of CHRIST, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither his Flesh did see Corruption. To the same Purpose (but more briefly) St. Paul, Chap. xiii. ver. 36, 37. David, after he had served his own Generation, by the Will of God, fell on sleep, and saw Corruption; but he whom God raised again, saw no Corruption. And if David so described his own Sufferings, as at the same time to foreshew the Sufferings of Christ; why might he not so describe his own Hopes, as at the same time to foreshew the Resurrection of Christ? There is this Reason (I say) to shew that he did so, that in no other way of Interpretation

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pretation will the Sense come up to the full Strength of the Expression.

What has been said of *secondary* Prophecies may as well be applied to *Types*, in respect of which the *Law* itself was nothing less than a Prophecy of *Christ*; and is so represented by our Saviour himself, *Matt. xi. 13.* *All the Prophets, AND THE LAW prophesied until John.* The ancient *Jews* very well understood the Manner of speaking by *Types* and *Similitudes*, as may be proved by a Variety of Examples. I will mention but one, the Institution of the *Pass-over*, which, in the several Circumstances of its Appointment, was a Type of their Deliverance out of the Land of *Egypt*. Now if things *past* may be represented by Types; why not, as well, things *to come*? Or if the Prophets did foreshew many Events relating to the temporal Covenant by Types and Similitudes (which is a Fact not to be disputed) why might not other Matters or Events which pertained to the spiritual Covenant be foreshewn in the same manner? The temporal Covenant was, in the Nature of it, the Introduction to a new and a better Hope,

Hope, which stood as its End and Completion; and when we consider the several Appointments under the Law, and see in many of them a manifest Resemblance to what happened under the Gospel Dispensation; what can we conclude, but that the one was intended to shadow out the other? Let any one read the Ceremonial of the *Scape Goat*, which was to be performed yearly upon the great Day of Expiation, when the Priest was to make an Atonement for the Sins of all the People, as it stands *Levit. xvi. 21, 22.* He is there ordered to take *two Goats, and present them before the Lord.* Upon the Head of one of them the High Priest was to *lay his Hands, and confess over him all the Iniquities of the Children of Israel*—PUTTING THEM UPON THE HEAD of the Goat. After this he was to be *let loose into the Wilderness*, and it is said, *the Goat shall BEAR UPON HIM all their Iniquities unto a Land not inhabited.* Let any one, I say, read this, and compare it with what *Jeremiah* says the Messiah should do, *viz.* that he should BEAR our Grievs, our Sorrows, our Iniquities; and that God would LAY

UPON



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UPON HIM *the Iniquities of us all*; and let him try whether he can persuade himself, that nothing was meant by this, but a mere Ceremony. The like may be said of the *Paschal Lamb*, and in short of all the bloody Sacrifices under the Law; the Reason of which it will be very difficult to explain, without supposing them to have been intended as Types and Shadows of that *great Sacrifice*, that was to be offered up for the Sins of the World. And when it is perceived in these and in other Appointments of the Law (and the Event will always shew it) that there was a typical Meaning in them referable to the Gospel Dispensation, they will be as truly *Prophecies of Christ*, as Prophecies expressed by Words and Sentences are.

But as the Compass allowed me is but narrow, I have not time to enter minutely into these things, but must refer such as desire farther Satisfaction, to those who have written professedly upon the Subject of Prophecy; from whom I have taken just so much as I judged sufficient for my present Purpose, which is to shew, that  
throughout

throughout the whole Old Testament there are Notices given of a great Prophet to come, who should bring Salvation to all Nations and People; and that these Notices do all of them centre in our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

But it will be objected, that though Prophecy in many respects agrees with the Character of *Christ*, yet in some respects it doth not agree; for

1. Those same Prophets, which foreshew that under the Kingdom of the Messiah the *Gentiles* should be called in to be the People of God, do also foreshew the *Restoration* and *Re-establishment* of the *Jewish* Nation, who are to be recalled from their several Dispersions, and be made again one People under *Messiah* their King. Thus *Isaiah*, Chap. xi. after he had said, *In that Day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an Ensign to the People, to it shall the Gentiles seek*—presently adds—and it shall come to pass in that Day, that the Lord shall set his Hand the second time to recover the Remnant of his People  
which

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*which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, &c.—and shall assemble the Outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four Corners of the Earth.* So likewise Chap. xlix. ver. 6. these two Events are joined together in the same Prophecy; *It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my Servant, to raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the Preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, &c.* So again, Jeremiah, Chap. xxiii. ver. 5—9. *Behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous BRANCH, &c. in his Days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely—and they shall no more say, The Lord liveth which brought up the Children of Israel out of the Land of Egypt; but The Lord liveth which brought up, and which led the Seed of the House of Israel out of the North Country, and from all Countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own Land.* But most fully the Prophet Ezekiel, Chap. xxxvii. ver. 21—26. *Behold I will take the Children of Israel from among the Heathen—and will*  
gather

gather them on every side, and bring them into their own Land; and I will make them one Nation in the Land—and one King shall be King to them all—they shall not any more defile themselves with their Idols—but I will save them out of all their Dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them, so shall they be my People and I will be their God. And David my Servant [i. e. the Messiah] shall be King over them, and they shall have one Shepherd; they shall also walk in my Judgments, and observe my Statutes and do them; and they shall dwell in the Land that I have given unto Jacob my Servant, wherein your Fathers have dwelt, and they shall dwell therein, even they and their Children, and their Children's Children, for ever; and my Servant David shall be their Prince for ever.

These Passages (and more there are in the Old Testament to the same effect) are very express; and that the Jews understood them as containing the Promise of a temporal Restoration, is manifest from the Question which the Apostles put to our Saviour, *Acts* i. 6. Lord, wilt thou at this time RESTORE again THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL?



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ISRAEL? But nothing at all of this hath happened.

2. Prophecy foreshews such a State of *Peace and Tranquillity* under the Kingdom of the Messiah, as we or our Forefathers have never seen. Thus the Psalmist, *In his Days* [*i. e.* in the Days of the Messiah] *shall the Righteous flourish, and abundance of Peace so long as the Moon endureth*, Psal. lxxii. 7. So *Isaiab*, Chap. ii. ver. 4. *He* [the Messiah] *shall judge among the Nations, and rebuke many People; and they shall beat their Swords into Plough-shares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up Sword against Nation, neither shall they learn War any more.* Again, Chap. xi. ver. 6. *The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lye down with the Kid; and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a little Child shall lead them; and the Cow and the Bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the Lion shall eat Straw like the Ox; and the sucking Child shall play on the Hole of the Asp; and the weaned Child shall put his Hand upon the Cockatrice Den;*

*Den; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy Mountain; for the Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.*

To all this the Answer is short and plain, viz. That though these Prophecies have not been accomplished by any thing we have yet seen, nothing hinders but that they may hereafter be accomplished. Here are two great Events plainly connected together by Prophecy, viz. the Coming in of the *Fulness* of the Gentiles, and the *Restoration* of the Twelve Tribes of *Israel*; and the *peaceable* times are to be subsequent to these Events. For thus *Isaiah*, *It shall come to pass in the last Days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be establisht in the Top of the Mountains—and ALL NATIONS shall flow unto it; and many People shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his Ways, and we will walk in his Paths; and he shall judge among the Nations, and shall rebuke many People—and THEN it*

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was

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was that they should *beat their Swords into Plow-shares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks, &c.* Now as it is only said, that these things shall happen in *the last Days* [*i. e.* under the Kingdom of the Messiah] but no particular Period of that Kingdom is marked out by Prophecy, we are at liberty yet to wait for their Accomplishment, and so much the rather, because the same Spirit of Prophecy, under the New Testament, *directs* us to expect it. It is evident (as I have just now observed) from the Question which the Apostles put to our Saviour, that they (in common with the rest of the *Jews*) expected the *Restoration of the Kingdom to Israel.* And what says our Saviour in answer? *It is not for You to know the Times or the Seasons which the Father hath put in his own Power.* Acts i. 7. In which Words *Christ* doth not say, that there should not be any such Restoration; he rather supposes that there *should*, and only tells them, that the Time *when* was not a matter fit for them to enquire after. But St. Paul is express, that a time shall be when *the Fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and*

ALL ISRAEL *shall be saved.* Rom. xi. 25, 26. This Time we have not yet seen ; but Ages to come may see it ; and as, whenever these Events shall happen, they will introduce a great Change in the Face of things ; that such a general State of Peace and Tranquility will not thereupon ensue, as will justify those Descriptions which the Prophets have given, is certainly more than Unbelievers are able to prove. Whether this *Restoration* of the Kingdom to *Israel* will be a *temporal* Government under the Messiah, or whether the flourishing State of the Church after their Conversion, is only adumbrated to us in the Writings of the Prophets under the Images of Temporal things, is a Question about which we must be contented to be ignorant, till the Event explains it ; and since we have seen so many Prophecies already verified in *Christ*, there is all the Reason in the World to believe, that the rest will be accomplished in God's due Season.

Upon the whole then, I hope I may have leave to conclude, that *Christ* is justified in



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his Appeal to the Scriptures, as *testifying* of him. Recollect, for your Ease, the principal Points of the Evidence. Thus;

We find from the Beginning a Promise made, that *the Seed of the Woman* should *bruise the Serpent's Head*; we find also a Promise made to *Abraham*, repeated to *Isaac*, then to *Jacob*, and at last resting in *Judah*, that *in their Seed, all the Families of the Earth* should be blessed. What the *bruising of the Serpent's Head* by the *Woman's Seed* means; and how or in what Sense the *Seed of Abraham* was to be a *Blessing to all Nations*, the Promises themselves do not explain; but as the Work of *Jesus Christ* (born of a Woman, and of the Seed of *Abraham*, through *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and *Judah*) in restoring Immortality to all Mankind, which was lost by that Transgression into which our first Parents, seduced by the Serpent, fell, and thereby triumphing over the Serpent, who had triumphed over the whole Race of *Adam*; as, I say, this great Work is perfectly well described by those Expressions, and we see nothing else of sufficient Importance

Importance to which they can be applied ; we thence conclude, that this was the thing intended,

When we come down lower, we find the Sense of Prophecy perfectly corresponding with this Interpretation. *Moses* was sent of God to the *Israelites*, and sufficiently declares the End of his Mission to be, not to be a *Blessing to all Nations*, but to bring the Sons of *Jacob* out of *Egypt*, where they were held in Bondage, and put them into Possession of the Land of *Canaan*, according to the Tenor of the Covenant made with *Abraham*. The Promise therefore of a *Blessing to all Nations* was not accomplished in *Moses*, but remained to be accomplished in some other Person yet to come ; and upon whom can we so naturally fix our Eyes, as upon that Prophet whom *Moses* expressly foretells God would *raise up* to the *Israelites* from among their Brethren, i. e. of the Seed of *Jacob* ? *David* was the Son of *Jacob* by *Judah*, to whom the Promise of the *Blessing to all Nations* was limited ; and to him a *Seed*, a *Branch* was promised,

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who was to have an *everlasting Kingdom*, and to be the Author of a *new Covenant* (so called in distinction from the Covenant given by *Moses*) in which *all Nations* had an Interest. This Promise could not be accomplished in *Solomon*, nor in any of the Kings that succeeded him, to the time of the Captivity; for they were the Prophets who prophesied about that time, who spake of this Seed as yet to come; by various Names indeed, but under the *same Characters*, viz. of one who was to gather both *Jews* and *Gentiles* into one, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to be God's *Salvation unto the Ends of the Earth*. Here then we find that *Seed* which was to be a *Blessing to all Nations* at the *End* of the Old Testament, which we find at the *Beginning* of it set forth in his proper Character; and if you ask the *Time* when he was to appear, it is so pinned down by Prophecy that there is no mistaking it. It was to be after *Seventy Weeks of Years* were expired; it was to be whilst the second Temple was standing, and before the Dissolution of the *Jewish Commonwealth*. Within this Period

JESUS

JESUSCHRIST came and answered the prophetic Characters of him that *was* to come, in every Particular.

This is the Argument, in short, which I am willing to submit to every candid, impartial Judge. One thing you must have observed (and I am not unwilling it should be observed) *viz.* that the clear understanding of these Prophecies is owing to the Events in which they have been accomplished; which is what St. Peter means, when he limits the *Obscurity* of Prophecy by the following Words, *UNTIL the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your Hearts*, 2 Pet. i. 19. Before the Event all Prophecy is obscure. When the Event happens, and we can compare it with the Prophecy, Prophecy grows clear and plain. But the Sense which arises upon this Comparison, is not less the true Sense because the Event helps us to make it out. For the Event does not create the Sense, but finds it; and it is in this, as it is in all other Cases; if we do but know a Writer's Meaning, it is of



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no Consequence, as to any Use that may be made of it, how we come by it.

To make some Use then of what has been said, it is an uncontested Point, that these Prophecies were not given out *after* the Event; for the latest of the Prophets lived long before *Jesus Christ*; and some of them were older than *Moses*. The Prophecies themselves were publickly known, and had been received among the *Jews* as the Oracles of God, from the Time of their Delivery. Now from hence it will follow, that the Coming of *Jesus Christ* was *foreknown* either by the Prophets, or by that Spirit which directed the Prophets, and declared it by their Mouths. Take it which way you please, Prophecy will be a *Miracle* distinct from the Miracles wrought by *Christ* himself, and concurring with them to establish his Authority, upon Supposition that the Miracles wrought by *Christ* are so circumstanced, as to be a just, legitimate Evidence of a Prophet's Mission: I say, *upon this Supposition* Prophecy will be Evidence for *Christ*, but *not else*; if for no other Reason

son yet for this, that it was *one* of the Characters of the Messiah, that he was to be a *Prophet*, and consequently to give the proper Evidence of a Prophet's Mission. But it may be added (and it is very necessary to be observed) that the Prophecies of the Messiah to come could have been no Evidence for *Christ*, without some *public Attestation* on the part of God that He was the true Person among the Variety that might possibly have made the same Pretensions. During the Time of *Christ's* Ministry, any Person of the Family of *David*, and born at *Bethleem*, might have pretended that he was the *promised Seed*; and in such a Case, if neither the one nor the other had wrought Miracles, nothing could have been concluded in favour of either. But *Christ* coming in the *Power of God*, left no room for Competition; and it appearing that the prophetic Characters agreed in him, it made the Evidence full and complete that THIS was HE. Therefore we may observe, that our Saviour in his Answer to the Baptist's Question, who sent to know whether he was the *Christ*, appeals

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to his Miracles in the first place, as without which his Appeal to the Prophets could never stand. *Go and shew John again those things which ye do bear and see: The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up.* Matt. xi. 4, 5. And this was the Method which the Apostles followed in treating with the *Jews*, whom they sent indeed to the Prophets, to be instructed that *Jesus* was the *Christ*; but not without putting them in mind that he was a Man APPROVED of God among them, by *Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did in the midst of them*; particularly insisting upon his *Resurrection* from the Dead, whereof they were sent to be Witnesses throughout the World, and which was the Epitome and Compendium of all the rest. Consult for this the *Acts of the Apostles, Chap. ii. ver. 22, & seq.* and in several other Places.

You see then how both Parts of the Evidence hang upon each other. *Christ* could not be received upon the foot of his own Miracles,

Miracles, without shewing in himself the Character of the Prophet that was foretold. He could not challenge to be received upon the Evidence of Prophecy, without the Evidence of his own Miracles. It was not that there was any *internal* Defect in either kind of Evidence that the other was to supply; but it was that Circumstances *externally* were such, that without the Concurrence of both, neither of them could properly be applied. In other Words; without *Christ's* own Miracles the Evidence of Prophecy would have stood *unconnected* with his Pretensions; and without the Concurrence of the prophetic Characters, his Appeal to Prophecy could not have been justified. And therefore both kinds of Evidence were necessary.

I have stated this Matter as clearly as I am able; and there are two opposite Errors which hereby stand refuted.

I. One is the Opinion of those who think, that "the Application of the most direct and express Prophecies, has not of itself



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“itself the Nature of a direct or positive  
 “Proof; but can only be a *sine qua non*;  
 “an Application of certain Marks, *without*  
 “which no Person could be the promised  
 “Messiah.” In other Words; “that the  
 “Application of direct and express Prophe-  
 “cies to *Christ*, is nothing but such a Con-  
 “gruity of Marks or Characters, as removes  
 “all *Objections*, by which an Adversary  
 “would endeavour to prove that he was  
 “not He<sup>d</sup>.” Surely this cannot be the  
 Scripture Notion! For will any one say,

<sup>d</sup> I was surprized to find so able a Writer as Dr.  
*Clarke* fallen into this Notion. And yet the Words  
 here recited are *his own*, as they stand *Evid. of Nat.*  
*and Rev. Rel.* p. 259. ed. 6. The Reason he gives for  
 his Opinion is no other, than what has been obviated  
 above; viz. “Many were of the Seed of *Abraham*,  
 “of the Tribe of *Judah*, and of the Family of *David*,  
 “and born in *Bethleem* of *Judea*, and suffered, and  
 “were cut off; and yet neither *any* nor *all* of these  
 “Characters could prove any Man to be the Messiah;  
 “but the want of any one of them would prove, that any  
 “Man was *not* he.” I know not who these *many* were.  
 But the Fact admitted, it is true that neither *any*, nor  
 all of these Characters put together, are Evidence of  
*Christ's* being the Messiah, separate from his Miracles;  
 but, his Miracles supposed, they *become* Evidence, as has  
 that

that a Man is a *Witness* for him, because he has nothing to *object* against him? But our Saviour says, that the Scriptures *testify* of him. The Greek is *μαρτυρεῖν*; the very Word which he uses when, speaking of his own Miracles, he says, *The Works which I do in my Father's Name; they BEAR WITNESS of me*; and is indeed a Word of that Force, that the most direct and positive Evidence is not to be expressed by any stronger Term.

been explained. I cannot therefore subscribe to what the Doctor says, upon the Question put by our Saviour, Luke xxiv. 26. OUGHT NOT Christ to have suffered these things; &c. viz. that this "is not proving from his Sufferings that Jesus was the Christ, but removing the Objection, by which some were apt to infer from his Sufferings, that he could not possibly be the Christ." For by what Authority does he say this? For ought that appears to the contrary, our Saviour, in appealing to the Prophecies concerning the Sufferings of the Messiah, meant to take the full Advantage of them to himself, and therefore to cite them as *Evidences*, if in the Nature of the thing they are such, as, under the Circumstance above supposed, they have been proved to be.

John x. 25.

2. The other is the Error of those who first grounding the Sense of Prophecy on *Christ's Authority*, as a divine Interpreter, afterwards bring Prophecy back as Evidence in support of *Christ's Mission*; which is certainly a bad way of reasoning. For to say, "I believe *Christ* to be a true Prophet; "on the Evidence of his Miracles;" and again, "I believe that the Prophecies are "truly applied to *Christ*, because he who is "true hath so applied them;" quite destroys the *distinct Evidence* of Prophecy, and resolves the whole into the Evidence of Miracles. In this way of reckoning *Christ* will establish the Sense of Prophecy, but Prophecy cannot establish his Authority. Prophecy therefore, in order to make it a distinct Evidence, must have a Bottom of its own to stand upon; as in ordinary cases to qualify a Man to be a Witness, he must have something of his own to say. If two Men should come into Court to give their Evidence, and the second should say no more than what he has upon the Authority of the first; there would be but *one* Witness.

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Witness. And so if Prophecy had no other Sense but what it borrowed from *Christ's* Interpretation; the Witness would be but *one*. It is necessary therefore, I say, that Prophecy should contain a Sense, which, when the Prophecies come to be compared with the Events, will appear to point at *Christ*, by common Rules of Interpretation, and separate from any Use or Application made by him or by his Apostles; and this is the Sense which I have been endeavouring to lay before you. I am well aware, how ready Unbelievers are to find fault with the Christian Interpretation of Prophecy, and to say that it is mere *Guess-work*, *arbitrary* Applications of dark Passages to Events which the Authors never thought of: For which there will be always this Handle, that the Language of Prophecy standing (as it needs must) *now*, just as it did when Prophecy was at first given; general, undetermined, pointing at something hereafter to come, but not (precisely) saying *what*; any one that pleases may say—*Jesus Christ* is not expressly mentioned, and how then do you know that he is intended?



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ed? But this notwithstanding, no reasonable Man will say, that there is no Use of *Characters*. We use them every Day in Multitudes of Instances; and *Characters* will sometimes mark a Man out so certainly, that you can no more mistake him than if he had been spoken of by *Name*. Is it not then strange and amazing, that in a Succession of some thousands of Years, there should be a Series of Characters found in the Old Testament, all of them by easy and natural Interpretation agreeing in *one Man*; that *one Man* giving such Proofs of a divine Mission as *Christ* gave! For my own part, I think it impossible to account for this, without supposing that the Hand and Counsel of God was concerned in this thing, from the Beginning to the End; or, if those who are otherwise minded, will shew an Example parallel to it in all History, I will give up the Argument.

And now having fully considered the *first* Part of the Evidence for *Christ's* Mission, the Evidence from *Prophecy*; I am led to  
the

the *second*, the Evidence from his *Miracles*. But as a Conclusion to this, I will beg leave to remark, that as Prophecy is Evidence to establish the Authority of *Christ's* Mission; so the Accomplishment of Prophecy in *Christ* fully establishes the Authority of Prophecy; as shewing both that the ancient Prophecies have been faithfully recorded and transmitted to us, and are indeed the Dictates of that Spirit to whom alone future Contingencies are open. And this yields a strong *internal* Proof of the Authority of the Books of the Old Testament in general; which since they are found to be true in so material a Point, it is reasonable to conclude, that they are so in the whole.

We are now come to the *Of the Evidence from Miracles.*  
second Branch of our Saviour's  
Evidence, his MIRACLES.

*The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up.* For the particular Histories of these Works, I must refer to the Books of the New Testament, which are in every body's Hands. The

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Questions that arise upon the Subject are these two, viz. 1. Whether such Works were really wrought as the History records. 2. Whether, supposing them to have been wrought, they are a just and legitimate Evidence of *Christ's* Mission. I shall begin with the last; because, unless it can be proved that they are such Evidence, it will be Loss of Time and Labour to enquire whether they are or are not truly recorded.

In the first place then, it is clear, that these Works are truly of the miraculous kind. For there is nothing more remote from the common Operations of Nature, than raising dead Men to Life. And though Diseases are often curable by natural Means, yet *all* are not, nor *any* by such Means as *Christ* used; as by a *Word* speaking, by a *Touch*, and the like. It is clear in the next place that *Christ* appealed to these Miracles, and offered them as Evidence, to shew that he came from God. *The Works that I do in my Father's Name they bear witness of me.* John x. 25. The Question therefore will be, By **WHAT POWER** were these

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 these things done? If you say, By the Power of God, the Evidence must be admitted. For, it has been already shewn, that Miracles, wrought by the Power of God in support of a declared Mission from him, are as truly a Testimony from God, as any Man's Declaration by Word of Mouth, or under his Hand and Seal, are his Testimony.

But here it will be demanded, How are we assured that these were the Works of God, and not of some intermediate Agent? An Author of great and deserved Reputation hath, in treating upon this Subject, laid it down as his first Principle, that none but God can work a Miracle, i. e. by his own natural Power; and if this could be made good, the Question would be brought to a very short Issue. For upon this foot the Conclusion would immediately follow—*Christ came in the Name of God, and*  
*Dr. Fleetwood, late Bishop of Ely, in his Essay on Miracles, followed herein, very lately, by Mr. Le-moine, in his Treatise on Miracles, in which Book he has shewn much Good-sense and Learning.*



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wrought Miracles, to justify his Pretensions ; therefore he was sent of God. But this Opinion seems to me to be attended with insuperable Difficulties, and founded upon very insufficient Grounds. The general Reason assigned for it is, that " the Law of " Nature being settled by divine Power, " can be unsettled by no less." Not to dispute this Point, I answer, that a Miracle may be wrought, where no Law of Nature is unsettled. For Instance. It is a Law of Nature that the Earth draws all Bodies towards it, that are within the Sphere of its Attraction ; and that if a Stone lies upon the Ground, there it will rest, till it is removed by some external Force, superior to that Force by which the Earth draws it to itself. I ask then ; When I take a Stone in my Hand, and lift it up from the Ground, what Law of Nature is unsettled ? Plainly none. For the Stone, whilst it is in my Hand, still retains its gravitating Power ; and the reason why it is lifted up, is because the Force of my Hand exceeds that Force by which the Stone gravitates to-

wards the Earth. All this therefore is according to the Law of Nature. Would not the Case be the same, supposing a *Spirit*, or *invisible* Being, should lift up this Stone? Exactly. Will you say then that no Spirit but God hath naturally Power sufficient to lift up a Stone from the Ground, which a Man or a Child can lift up? It would be absurd. And yet though there is no Miracle in my lifting up a Stone with my Hand; should I only give the Word of Command and say, *Stone, be thou lifted up*, and some Spirit should instantly take it up, and suspend it high in the Air; it would be a Miracle of the same kind with that mentioned by our Saviour, *Matt. xvii. 20. If ye have Faith as a Grain of Mustard Seed, ye shall say unto this Mountain, Remove hence to yonder Place, and it shall remove.* There is no Law of Nature unsettled, when a *Spirit* lifts up the Stone, any more than when a *Man* lifts it up; and yet, I say, here is a Miracle wrought; because though the Stone is lifted up according to the *Laws* of Nature, its being lifted up *at the Command of a Man*, is not according to the *Course* of Nature.

What is true in one Case may be as true in Multitudes of Cases more (for who knows how far the natural Powers of intermediate Beings may extend?) and therefore setting this Principle aside as unsafe to build upon, let us try to come at the Evidence in some other way. The Inconveniency, which is apprehended to arise from admitting, that other Beings besides the supreme may naturally have the Power of working Miracles, is; that upon this foot you can never know, whether God be the Author of the Miracle or not, nor, consequently, whether the Doctrine, in confirmation of which such Miracle is wrought, hath the divine Attestation. "For (say they) you could not know I came from, and was sent by, such a Prince, by my bringing his Seal along with me; if other People had the same Seal, and would lend it to others to use as they saw fit." But this sort of reasoning (plausible as it may seem) is really of no Weight. For, to apply the

Objection to the Case of our Saviour *Christ*; let us suppose, that, *natural Power* only considered, *ALL* the Miracles wrought by him might have been the Work of some intermediate Being. This is granting to Unbelievers all that they can ask, and more perhaps than in reason they can demand. For though it be true, that intermediate Beings (their natural Powers considered) may work Miracles; it will not hence follow, that they can work *ALL* Miracles. Some Effects may be within the reach of created Powers, others may *not*; and whether *many* of *Christ's* Miracles may not be of this latter sort, is a Point that will be considered by and by. But for Argument sake (I say) let the thing be granted, that, *natural Power* only considered, *ALL* the Miracles done by *Jesus Christ* might have been the Work of some created, intermediate Being; still do I not see how this Concession hurts the Evidence. For what sort of Being do you suppose should have wrought them? Intermediate Beings are either *good* or *evil*. A *good* Being it could not be, unless you



suppose that he did these Works at the Command, and by the Authority of God. For *Christ* came in the Character of God's Prophet; declared he was sent as the Messenger of his Will to Mankind; and in support of this Character he wrought his Miracles. If this Pretension was not true, *Christ* was guilty of a high Usurpation, and of great Impiety; in which no good Being can possibly be supposed to make himself a Partner. If *Christ* had come in no Character; the enabling him to work Miracles might have been considered as a thing indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden, but simply permitted. But to vouch for an *Impostor*; for one that falsely pretends to come in God's stead; is a high and flagrant Offence which no honest Man can be guilty of. If therefore the Miracles of *Christ* be supposed to have been the Works of some good Being, it must needs be that such Being knew him to be what he pretended to be, and had God's Warrant and Authority for what he did; which brings the Matter to the same point as if God had wrought them by his own immediate Hand; for every Man does what

that is done by his Substitute for that Purpose. And if you say, it was not a good but an evil Being that wrought these Miracles, you will find it as hard to shew a Reason why he should do it. The unbelieving Jews had some such Notion as this; for when Christ cast out Devils, they said he did it by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils. But what says our Saviour? Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to Desolation; and every City or House divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his Kingdom stand? Matt. xii. 25, 26. Our Saviour does not say that Satan (his natural Power considered) could not cast out Satan. He rather supposes the contrary. For Beelzebub was the Prince of the Devils; and every Prince is presumed to have Power over his own Subjects. But he shews the Absurdity of supposing that he would cast them out; because in so doing, he would have acted to the Destruction of his own Kingdom. The Argument is very natural and familiar; calculated to work Conviction in the most common Apprehensions; that no Power

can

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can reasonably be supposed to work to its own Destruction. And this may be said of all Miracles, the visible Tendency of which is to promote Truth, and Virtue, and Goodness: They cannot be the Work of the Devil, because they operate to the Subversion of his Dominion; for it is by Sin that the Devil rules in the Children of Disobedience. Such were all the Miracles wrought by Jesus Christ; and therefore it hurts not the Evidence, if it be supposed that the Devil or his Agents (their natural Power considered) might have wrought them, so long as it appears that they could have no Reason or Inducement to work them, but Cause to the contrary; just as it would not hurt the Evidence from my Seal, though other People had the same, upon supposition that it was against the Interest of every Man in the Kingdom to make use of it except myself.

But this is not all we have to say. For supposing it true, that evil Beings not only had the natural Power to do the Works of Christ, but also that they were disposed to have made use of that Power; still the Question



tion will be. Whether it can reasonably be supposed, that God would have suffered it? For as all natural Powers are of God, they must be exercised in dependance upon him, and subject to his Restraint and Control. And I say, that as God always *can*, so he always *will* restrain the natural Powers of evil Beings, so far as to leave a very plain and visible Distinction between his true Prophets, and those who falsely pretend to his Authority; because the contrary Supposition *will* indeed leave no room for the use of Miracles, and consequently will destroy the single Method by which God *can* at any time manifest himself to the Sons of Men, in Matters which fall not within the reach of natural Knowledge. I do not say, that God cannot suffer a false Prophet to work a Miracle, or Miracles; nor is it necessary to say so in order to save the Use of Miracles. It is enough to say, that if he does suffer an Impostor to work Miracles, he will not, he cannot, *leave himself without Witnesses*, to all who will attend and are desirous to know his Will. It is rightly observed in the Objection, that you could



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not know I came "from, and was sent by, such a Prince, by my bringing his Seal along with me, if other People had the same Seal, and would lend it to others to use as they saw fit." But is not the Difference between the two Cases visible? When a Prince lends his Seal to be used in common, he puts it out of his own Power; and under this Circumstance the Seal can be no Evidence. But God is every where, and at all times *present*, to all created Beings; and therefore to make the Cases parallel, you must suppose this Prince (in the Comparison) standing at every Man's Elbow that is disposed to make use of his Seal, ready and able to restrain it, under such or such Circumstances. In this case you may suppose him to give out as many Seals as you please, and the Evidence (when such Circumstances appear) will be the very same.

The Result then is, that Miracles as such, or Miracles *simply* and *absolutely* considered, are not Evidence of a Prophet's Mission; but Miracles so or so *circumstanced*.

ced. The Nature of the Doctrine taught may be such as will shew an Impostor; as when it contradicts common Sense, overthrows the Principles of natural Religion, or of any prior Revelation sufficiently established. Under these or any of these Circumstances, no Miracles can be admitted as Evidence; because we are sure that God cannot act in Opposition to *himself*; and consequently if Miracles are wrought in support of such Doctrine, they must be the Work of some evil Being, and not the Work of God. But put the Case, that the Doctrine as to the Matter of it is *indifferent*, that is, something which Natural Reason, or any prior Revelation, neither warrants nor contradicts; in this case, I say, Miracles will establish such a Teacher's Mission, PROVIDED no one sets up any CONTRARY Pretension supported likewise by the Testimony of Miracles: Because if Miracles are not to be admitted as Evidence, when nothing appears to *hinder*, they are *never* to be received, and it will be impossible for God to reveal himself; which is absurd to be supposed.

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The Case would be the same, if two Persons should arise, pretending each a Commission from God, of *contrary* Import the one to the other, and Miracles should be wrought in favour of both; UNLESS, in respect of *Power*, there should appear a SUPERIORITY of the one above the other. For here would be two Witnesses attesting contrary *Facts*, and supported by equal Authority; in which case it will be impossible to know which to believe. But if there should be a VISIBLE SUPERIORITY of *Power* in the one above the other; this would sufficiently distinguish the true Prophet from the false; as in ordinary Cases a Superiority in *Character*, as to Knowledge and Probity, will point out the true Witness: For so far as a Man stands distinguished from another, so far he stands without a Rival. From these Principles this general Conclusion will arise, *viz.* That if any Person falsely pretends to a Commission from God; God will either not suffer Miracles to be wrought at all to give Credit to his Pretensions; or if, for Reasons of his Providence, he should suffer evil

Beings

Beings to work a Miracle or Miracles, he will defeat them by the Evidences of a SUPERIOR POWER; which to all Intents and Purposes is the same thing, as if he had not permitted Miracles to have been wrought by such evil Beings. This Principle agrees with our natural Conceptions of the supreme Governor of the World; who is as much concerned in Honour to guard the Subjects of his Kingdom against Impostures of this kind, as any earthly Monarch is to expose the Villain who should forge his Seal, and usurp a Commission that was never granted him. And as this Principle is founded in right Reason, so it corresponds with *Fact* and *Experience*; as I shall now shew, by examining the Pretensions of *Moses* and of *Jesus Christ*, by these Rules.

As to the first; *Moses* was sent (as we have shewn) to bring the Children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and to settle them in the Land of *Canaan*. In order to this, he had two things to do after he was himself satisfied that God had revealed himself to him. One was to convince the *Israelites* his



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his Brethren, that God had sent him and appointed him to be their Deliverer : The other, to oblige Pharaoh to let them go. The first End was obtained by the Signs which he did in the Sight of the People, previously to his going unto Pharaoh ; for so the History says, *The People BELIEVED, and bowed their Heads and worshipped.* Exod. iv. 30, 31. Thus far Moses had no Competitor ; and his Commission therefore stood unimpeached upon the foot of his Miracles. But the last Point was still to be provided for ; and to this Purpose he goes in unto Pharaoh, and says, *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, LET MY PEOPLE GO.* Chap. v. ver. 1. It is very necessary to be observed, that Pharaoh did not question the Truth of what Moses said, when he told him (as it is mentioned ver. 3.) that *the God of the Hebrews* had met with him, and charged him with this Message ; but he disputes the Authority of the God of the Hebrews, to command him to let the People go. *WHO is THE LORD, that I should obey his Voice to let Israel go ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.* ver. 2. Moses now executes his Commission, by working

working Miracles in the Sight of *Pharaoh*, and his Servants; not so much to convince them, that he came by the Authority of his own God (of whom the *Egyptians* knew nothing) as to shew them that the God, in whose Name he came, had both Authority to command, and Power to enforce whatever he should command; for thus the History represents the Case: *In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord*, Chap. vii. 17.—*that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God*, Chap. viii. 10.—*that thou mayest know that there is none like me in ALL THE EARTH—and in very deed for this Cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee MY POWER, and that MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED IN ALL THE EARTH*, Chap. ix. 14, 15, 16. These Passages shew (I say) that the Reason of God's working Miracles by the Hand of *Moses*, in the Sight of the *Egyptians*, was to make manifest HIS POWER; and to convince them and all the World, to whom the Fame of these Transactions should come, that though of those who were called Gods there were many, and Lords many, yet in him alone the sovereign Authority rested, and that he was in Power

superior to them all. When therefore Aaron cast down his Rod before Pharaoh, and before his Servants, and it became a Serpent, what does Pharaoh? Why, he called the wise Men, and the Sorcerers, who did in like manner with their Enchantments. For they cast down every Man his Rod, and they became Serpents. Chap. vii. ver. vi. and 12. Here now began a Competition. But what was the Point to be decided? Some state it thus: "*Moses wrought Miracles to prove his divine Commission; the Magicians, on the other hand, worked Miracles, to prove that Moses was an Impostor, and not sent of God,*" and hereupon they ask, *Which are we to believe?* But do you not perceive that the Case, as thus stated, contradicts the History? If when *Moses* wrought Miracles to justify his Mission, some other Person had arisen, pretending likewise to a Commission from God of contrary Import to *Moses's* Message, and had wrought Miracles in justification of such Pretension; this would have created a Difficulty, and it

See Dr. Clarke, who thus states the Case (*Evid. of Nat. and Rev. Rel.* p. 227. Ed. 6.) but not with his usual Judgment.

might

might reasonably have been asked, "Which are we to believe?" But this was not the Case. The Magicians, we will suppose (for it is not our Business at present to contest that Point) wrought Miracles as well as *Moses*; but they took upon themselves no Character; they pretended to no Commission from the God of the *Hebrews*; they had no Message to deliver as what their Works were to confirm. There was therefore no Competition between *Moses* and the Magicians, whether he was or was not an Impostor; but between *Moses* and the Magicians (or the God of *Moses* and the Gods of the Magicians) which of them had the greater Power; and how absurd would it be to ask, "Which are we to believe, *Moses*, or the Magicians?" when the Magicians had nothing to say!

It is very material to be observed, that the Magicians took the single Method that could have given a reasonable Satisfaction in this Question. For they did not undertake barely to work *Miracles*; but to do the very Works which they saw done by *Moses*. *Moses* turned his Rod into a Ser-



pent; so did they. *Moses* turned Water into Blood; so did they. *Moses* brought Frogs upon the Land of Egypt; the Magicians did the same. But here their Power was at an End, and they could go no farther. If the Magicians had wrought as many Miracles as *Moses* did, and they had been Miracles of another kind; it would have left the Question undecided. For who, among the great Variety of Miracles that may be thought of, can certainly tell, which of them requires the greater Degree of Power? Who, for Instance, can tell which is easier; to restore a blind Man to Sight, or to turn a Rod into a Serpent; to turn a Rod into a Serpent, or Water into Blood; or to turn Water into Blood, or to bring up Frogs? Upon these and such like Points, much Dispute may be raised. But when they attempted the very same Works that *Moses* did, and were stopped in the Attempt; this was Evidence to the most common Understanding, that their Power was restrained, and that the God of *Israel*, in whose Name *Moses* wrought, was superior to the Gods of the Egyptians, and to the Gods of the Nations round about them.

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I take this to be the true Resolution of this Case; and upon the whole it appears, that (the Facts admitted) *Moses's* Mission stands firmly established upon his Miracles; because, in respect of his Authority as a Prophet of the true God, he had no Competitor. The Magicians did not pretend to be Prophets of the true God; and had they come in the Name of any false God (of which yet we read nothing) this would have been confessing themselves as acting by the Power of evil Beings, and their Miracles would have deserved no Attention. Let us then proceed to the Case of *Jesus Christ*, who came in the Name of the true God, as *Moses* had done before him, with a Message of much greater Importance, and works Miracles to justify his Pretensions. Here again the same Objection recurs—"there were others who wrought Miracles as well as *Christ*; and in Opposition to *Christ*."—Very well. *Who* were they? and *what* were they? Did they come in the Name of God, as *Christ* did? Did they deliver any other Message than *Christ* delivered? And did they do the

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Works of *Christ* in Justification of their Pretensions? Shew me this Case, and I will give up the Evidence. But no such Case appears. There are two Instances to be met with in the New Testament, that may possibly be insisted on; *Simon* and *Elymas*. These are both styled \* *Sorcerers*, but it does not appear that they took upon themselves any other Character. But what were their Works? Did they do the Works of *Christ*? No. *Simon* plainly confesses himself inferior to the Apostles; for he *WONDERED, beholding the Miracles and Signs which were done. And when he saw, that through the laying on of their Hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them Money, saying, GIVE ME also this Power, &c.* ver. 18. Of *Elymas* we read no more, than that he *withstood Paul and Barnabas, seeking to turn away the Deputy [Sergius Paulus] from the Faith.* But *Paul* rebuked him and smote him with *Blindness* (ver. 11.) in like manner as his Predecessors in the Trade of *conjuring* were, in common with the rest of the *Egyptians*, smitten with *Boils*, *Exod. ix. 11.* Thus far then *Christ* and his Apostles stand clearly distin-

\* See *Acts* viii. 9. and Chap. xiii. 8.

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guished from all false Pretenders. But what shall we say to those *false Christs* and *false Prophets*, who, our Saviour says, should *arise* in after times, and *shew GREAT Signs and Wonders*? Matt. xxiv. 24. Why, the same that I have said to the rest. If they took upon themselves the Character of God's Prophets in Opposition to *Christ*, and if they wrought Miracles to justify their Pretensions (all which you are at liberty to suppose) still *one* necessary Mark was wanting, *they did not do the Works of Christ*. They could not say of themselves as he said of himself, *The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up*. If you deny this, and say they *did* these Works, shew me their History as well attested as *Christ's* History is, and I will believe it. But if they did them *not* (which I take to be very certain, for otherwise we should have heard more of them) the Reason must have been, because they could not do them; for the *Will* to deceive was not wanting. And thus if you examine the Case of all the Pretenders that History can furnish since the Days of *Christ*, you will



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find them all defective in some Mark or other that is essential to the Character of a true Prophet. If they came in the Name of God, they wrought no Miracles; or if they wrought Miracles, they either pretended to no Commission from God, or confessed an *Inferiority* to the true Prophets whom they opposed. The first was the Case of *Mahomet*; and one or the other of the two last was the Case of all the Miracle-workers, that have appeared either in the Heathen or in the Christian World, so far as their Histories deserve Credit. But we have no occasion to dispute *Facts*. They may ALL of them be admitted without any Impeachment of *Christ's* Mission, whom we do not receive as our Teacher and Lawgiver, barely because he wrought Miracles; but because he came to us in the Character of God's Messenger, and wrought Miracles in support of this Character, in which he shewed such a *Superiority* of Power, as sufficiently distinguished him from all *Impostors*.

The Argument then is plain and convincing, thus—There is no Defect on the  
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part of the Miracles of *Christ*, who was in Power superior to all that ever opposed him. There is no Defect in the Matter of his Revelation, to bar the Evidence of Miracles, his Doctrine not contradicting either the Principles of natural Reason, or any *prior* Revelation sufficiently established. Not the first, because his Laws are either the Law of Nature itself, or subservient to it, and the several Points offered to our Belief, though some of them are above the Power of Reason to explain, are in no Instance a Contradiction to Reason. Not the second, because there was no *prior* Revelation sufficiently established, except the *Jewish* and *Patriarchal*, of which the Christian Revelation is, not the *Destruction*, but the *Completion*. His Miracles therefore are to be admitted as Evidence of his divine Mission, as *Moses's* are, for the same Reason, to be admitted as Evidence of *his* divine Mission: For in none of these respects did *Moses* differ from *Christ*, unless we may except this one (certainly not to his *Disadvantage*) that he indeed had (properly speaking) no Competitor.

Let

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Let us try then, if we can carry the Argument a little farther. I have hitherto argued upon the Supposition, that, natural Power only considered, ALL the Miracles wrought by *Christ* might have been the Work of some intermediate Agent; which (as I have before observed) is a Point that may very reasonably be called in question. For it is very certain that *some* of our Saviour's Miracles were of that sort, that (so far as we are able to judge) they could not be the Work of any other Power, than that by which the Heavens and the Earth were made. What is raising a dead Man to Life, but doing the very thing which God did at the Creation of the World, when he *breathed* into the sluggish Clay the *Breath of Life*, and Man became a living Soul? What is multiplying Bread to satisfy the Hungry, or turning Water into Wine, but a Species of that plastic Power, which out of the same common Mass of Matter formed all that Variety of natural Substances that we see about us? If you see cause to think (as some Philosophers have thought) that God made the World by intermediate Agents;

Agents ; you may with as good Reason say, that the Miracles of *Christ* were done by intermediate Agents. But this Opinion, whether true or false, makes no Difference in the Argument. For though it should be admitted, that the World was not made by God immediately, but by some intermediate Power ; still it is supposed that his Wisdom and Counsel was concerned in the Work ; and if the same Hand by which the World was framed and fashioned, was likewise employed in bearing Testimony to the Author of our Redemption ; it will bear no Question, whether the Wisdom and Counsel of God was not alike concerned in both.

It may seem perhaps to be an Objection against this, that, if the Bible History is to be credited, such Works as we are now speaking of have been performed, even by those who confessedly were not sent of God.

We see no Difference between that Power which can raise a dead Man to Life, and that which can turn a Stick into a Serpent ; nor between that Power which can turn Water into Wine, and that which can turn  
Water



Water into Blood; yet the Magicians of Egypt did both. But, in the first place, I do not think it to be a clear Point, that the Magicians did either. I have hitherto *supposed* indeed that the Magicians really did what they are *said* to have done, because, as yet I have had no Occasion to enter into this Question. But it may very well bear a Dispute, whether these Feats of the Magicians were real Miracles, or were not rather *Impostures*, or *Delusions*, in which they made a shew of doing what they really did not. It is thus that most Christian Writers understand the Case; and thus that the Author of the *Book of Wisdom* treats it, Chap. xvii. ver. 7. where he calls these Feats *the ILLUSIONS of Art magic*. Magic and Sorcery are in the general Notion of them Arts of Imposture; and the New Testament as well as the Old considers them in this Light. *Simon* was a Sorcerer, and of him it is said, that he BEWITCHED the People of Samaria, GIVING OUT that he was some great one<sup>1</sup>; the manifest Character of a Cheat. That he was no Worker of Miracles seems plain; for if he had been

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 9.

such he would not have wondered when he saw the Miracles and Signs which were done by the Apostles; nor offered them Money to give them the same Power. Simon then was a vain Pretender, who did some strange things, to deceive the Multitude; and as *Elymas* bears the same Character, no doubt he was of the same Stamp.

But to return to the Magicians of Egypt. I do not think that the Language of the Scripture is Reason sufficient to lead us to think, that they really wrought the Works which were wrought by *Moses*. It is said, that the Magicians DID SO, OR IN LIKE MANNER, with their Incantments—that their Rods became Serpents—and that they brought up Frogs upon the Land of Egypt. But is there a more common Form of Speech, than to say of Impostors, that they do what they only seem to do? It will not be expected, I suppose, that I should explain how, or in what manner, the Magicians imposed upon *Pharaoh* and his Servants. I cannot explain how a common Jugler performs his *Leger de main*; and yet I know him to be a Cheat. And this may  
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very easily be conceived in the present Case, that something the Magicians might do in Imitation of what was done by *Moses*, that passed with many for the same thing; and this, for ought I can perceive, is all that the Scripture Language necessarily implies. But be it admitted that the Magicians wrought real Miracles; that they turned Rods into Serpents, Water into Blood, and multiplied Frogs as *Moses* did; the Question will still remain—*by what Power?* Those who are of this Opinion commonly have Recourse to the Power of evil Beings, of which yet the History is wholly silent. I should rather chuse therefore to suppose, with Bishop *Fleetwood*, that if these were true and real Miracles, they were wrought by the same Power that wrought in *Moses*; that is, by the Power of God; the more effectually to expose the Pretensions of the Magicians, who suffered a more signal Defeat in being baffled in their future Attempts, after having performed some great things, than they would if they had performed nothing. Nor let it be said, that in this way of resolving the Case we make God a Liar; for the Miracles attested nothing,

thing, because the Magicians (as I have before observed) pretended to nothing but to shew their Power. God wrought the Miracles, as we now suppose, and left the *Egyptians* to their own Conclusions; and what could they conclude upon the Upshot of the whole Matter but this, that *great* indeed was the God of the *Hebrews*, who, when the Gods of their Country (as it is to be presumed they thought) had by the Hands of the Magicians performed Wonders, in all human Apprehension and Judgment the *greatest*, did, by the Hand of his Servant *Moses*, manifest a Power superior to them all?

I have said thus much to shew, that we have no Evidence from the Scripture, that such Works as *Christ* wrought, could (*many* of them) have been performed by any Power less than the supreme, or (which is all one) other than *that* Power, which at first framed the material System. And I believe it will be impossible to find an Instance of such Works, performed by any, excepting the Messengers of the true God, in any well attested History. Or if you should find



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find such Instances, you may still (possibly) be at Liberty to suppose such Miracles to have been wrought by the Power of God, in like manner as the Miracles wrought by the Magicians (if really such Miracles were wrought) have been supposed to have been wrought by the Power of God. But those who are not satisfied with this Argument, may securely rest themselves upon the Principles above laid down, *viz.* that God sets the Bounds to all natural Powers, beyond which they cannot go; that he cannot be unfaithful to himself or to his Creatures, but will always shew a plain and visible Distinction, in point of Power, between his true Messengers and those who falsely pretend a Commission from him; and that such Power appeared in *Christ*, as no Prophet, falsely pretending to God's Authority in Opposition to him, ever equalled. So that upon the whole, I must take the Liberty to conclude, that the Miracles of *Jesus Christ*, supposing them wrought, are a full, legitimate Evidence of his Mission.

We are come then at last to the point of *Fact*; Were these Miracles wrought, or  
were

were they not? For the Decision of which Question, the Appeal lies to the Authority of the *New Testament*; as the Proof of *Moses's* Miracles rests upon the Authority of the *Old*. It cannot be reasonably expected, that I should enter into a particular Defence of the Authenticalness of these Books, which has employed the Learning of many Ages. Let it suffice to say, in general, that it stands upon the same Bottom by which the Authority of all ancient Writings is supported, *viz.* the public Reception of them as the genuine Writings of the Authors whose Names they bear, in a constant Succession through all Ages from the times in which those Writers lived. Of the Books of the *New Testament* it should be observed, that their early Dispersion into different Nations, and Translation into various ancient Languages (a Circumstance almost peculiar to these Books) are Evidence, not only of their coming down to us uncorrupted, but likewise of their great Fame and Reputation, as Pieces of genuine History, containing a true Narrative of real Facts, and not as romantic Tales forged by Impostors, to deceive the credulous Part

of Mankind. Instead of saying more to this Matter, I shall recite to you what has been well said upon it by a late Writer, who cannot be supposed, at least to be overmuch, *bigotted* to Christian Principles. “ The  
“ Authority of these Books (says he) does  
“ not depend upon the Faith of—any par-  
“ ticular Set of Men ; but on the general  
“ Credit and Reception which they found  
“ not only in all the Churches, but with  
“ all the private Christians of those Ages,  
“ who were able to purchase Copies of  
“ them : Among whom, though it might  
“ perhaps be the Desire of a few to corrupt,  
“ yet it was the common Interest of all,  
“ to preserve, and of none to destroy them.  
“ And we find accordingly, that they were  
“ guarded by all with the strictest Care, so  
“ as to be concealed from the Knowledge  
“ and Search of their Heathen Adversaries,  
“ who alone were desirous to extirpate  
“ them. After such a Publication there-  
“ fore, and wide Dispersion of them from  
“ their very Origin ; it is hardly possible  
“ that they should be either corrupted, or  
“ suppressed, or counterfeited by a few, of  
“ what Character or Abilities soever ; or  
“ that

“that according to the natural Course of  
“things they should not be handed down  
“from Age to Age, in the same manner  
“with the Works of all the other ancient  
“Writers of *Greece* and *Rome*; which  
“though transmitted through the Hands of  
“many profligate and faithless Generations  
“of Men, yet have suffered no Diminu-  
“tion of their Credit on that account : For  
“though in every Age there were several  
“perhaps, who, from crafty and selfish  
“Motives, might be disposed to deprave,  
“or even to suppress, some particular  
“Books; yet their Malice could reach  
“only to a few Copies, and would be re-  
“strained therefore from the Attempt, or  
“corrected at least after the Attempt, by  
“the greater Number of the same Books,  
“which were out of their reach, and re-  
“mained still incorrupt. Besides all this,  
“there were some Circumstances peculiar  
“to the Books of the New Testament,  
“which insured the Preservation of them  
“more effectually than of any of the other  
“ancient Books whatsoever; the Divinity  
“of their Character, and the religious Re-  
“gard which was paid to them, by all the



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“Sects and Parties of Christians; and  
 “above all, the mutual Jealousies of those  
 “very Parties, which were perpetually  
 “watching over each other, lest any of  
 “them should corrupt the Sources of that  
 “pure Doctrine, which they all professed  
 “to teach and to deduce from the same  
 “Books.—It was not in the Power there-  
 “fore (concludes he) of any Craft to im-  
 “pose spurious Pieces, in the room of those  
 “genuine ones, which were actually depo-  
 “sited in all Churches, and preserved with  
 “the utmost Reverence in the Hands of so  
 “many private Christians<sup>1</sup>.”

This Passage contains, I think, the full Import of what is offered, and reasonably offered, by Christian Writers, to shew, that the Books of the New Testament, as we now have them, are the genuine Writings of the several Authors whose Names they bear; and considering their Characters, and that they were most of them Apostles of *Jesus Christ*, who attended him in his Ministry; one would be inclined to think, that a fair Presumption will lie from hence, that his

<sup>1</sup> *Middleton's Free Inquiry, &c. p. 190.*

Miracles as by them reported are truly recorded: For in all ordinary Cases, unless special Reasons appear to question the Fidelity of an Historian, his History finds easy Credit when he writes of things done in his own times, and of which he himself pretends to have had a personal Knowledge. But an Unbeliever perhaps will, without much Difficulty, admit the Genuineness of the Books, and yet dispute the Truth of the *miraculous* Facts therein recorded, upon such Arguments as these—"We should  
" distinguish between things totally different  
" from each other; between *Miracle* and  
" *Nature*; the *extraordinary* Acts of God,  
" and the *ordinary* Transactions of Man;  
" to suspend our Belief of the one, while,  
" on the same Testimony, we grant it freely  
" to the other; and to require a different  
" Degree of Evidence for each, in proportion to the different Degrees of their Credibility<sup>m</sup>." Again; "we should suspend  
" our Assent to Reports of a miraculous  
" kind, though attested by an Authority,  
" which might safely be trusted in the Report of ordinary Events<sup>n</sup>." Once more;

<sup>m</sup> Ibid. p. 231.

<sup>n</sup> Ibid. p. 229.

“ the History of Miracles is of a kind totally  
“ different from that of common Events;  
“ the one to be suspected always of course,  
“ without the strongest Evidence, to con-  
“ firm it; the other to be admitted of course,  
“ without a strong Reason to suspect it.  
“ Ordinary Facts related by a credible Per-  
“ son, furnish no Cause of doubting from  
“ the Nature of the thing ; but if they be  
“ strange and extraordinary, Doubts natu-  
“ rally arise, and in proportion as they ap-  
“ proach towards the Marvellous, those  
“ Doubts will still increase and grow strong-  
“ er ; for mere Honesty will not warrant  
“ them ; we require other Qualities in the  
“ Historian ; a Degree of Knowledge, Ex-  
“ perience, and Discernment sufficient to  
“ judge of the whole Nature and Circum-  
“ stances of the Case ; and if any of these  
“ be wanting, we naturally suspend our Be-  
“ lief. A weak Man indeed, if honest,  
“ may attest common Events as credibly as  
“ the wisest ; yet can hardly make any Re-  
“ port that is credible of such as are miracu-  
“ lous ; because a Suspicion will always  
“ occur, that his Weakness and imperfect  
“ Knowledge of the Extent of human Art  
“ had

“had been imposed upon by the Craft of  
“cunning Juglers.” I make no question,  
but that every Unbeliever thinks he has a  
Right to consider the Apostles of *Christ* as  
*weak Men*; and will it not then be very na-  
tural to such a one to reply to a Christian,  
when he appeals to the New Testament to  
prove the Miracles of *Christ*, in some such  
manner as this? *viz.* We receive your Hi-  
story so far as it contains an Account of  
common Events; but so far as it contains  
a History of Miracles we reject it. Is it not  
thus that we must distinguish in reading  
all common Histories, unless we will suffer  
ourselves to be imposed upon? “There is  
“not a single Historian of Antiquity, whe-  
“ther Greek or Latin, who has not re-  
“corded Oracles, Prodigies, Prophecies,  
“and Miracles.—Many of these are at-  
“tested in the gravest manner, and by the  
“gravest Writers, and were firmly believed  
“by the Populace at the time; yet it is  
“certain, that there is not one of them  
“which we can reasonably take to be ge-  
“nuine.—For Example, *Dionysius of Ha-*  
“*licarnassus* is esteemed one of the most

° Ibid. p. 217.

B b 4

“faithful



" faithful and accurate Historians of Antiquity. We take his Word without scruple—in his Account of the Civil Affairs of Rome; yet we laugh at the fictitious Miracles which he has interspersed in it, [as when] in the War with the Latins he tells us, how the Gods *Castor* and *Polux* appeared visibly on white Horses, and fought on the Side of the Romans, who by their Assistance gained a complete Victory—— We admit the Battle and the Victory; and take the miraculous part to be, what it certainly was, the Fictions of the Commanders or Persons interested. — Thus in the Narrative of the Martyrdom of St. *Polyearp*; the point of History is, that he was condemned to Death at *Smyrna*, of which he was Bishop, and there actually burnt at the Stake, for his Profession of the Christian Faith. We have no doubt therefore of his Martyrdom, yet may reasonably pause at the Miracles which are said to have attended it," &c.

By this Distinction, the Author fancies that he has saved the Credit of ancient Hi-

<sup>p</sup> Ibid. p. 218—221.

story, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil, whilst he has reserved to himself a Liberty to reject (or to suspect at least) all Accounts of miraculous Events in either. But, I think, he is mistaken. For a miraculous Event may have all the Advantages of external Proof, that the most common Event has; and if, this notwithstanding, it may be treated as false or suspicious, I see not what there is in History that can be depended upon. But whatever there be in this, it is certain that the Argument lies as strong against the Gospel as against any other History; for why may not an Unbeliever go on and say, —“ Thus also in the Narrative of the “ Acts of *Jesus Christ*, the Points of History are, that he took upon himself to be “ a Prophet, and instituted a new Religion, “ for which he was cruelly put to death by “ the *Jews*. These Facts, and whatever “ other ordinary Occurrences are recorded “ in his History, we admit. But we pause “ at the Miracles which are said to have “ been wrought in his Favour, either when “ he was living or after he was dead; for “ they were weak Men that recorded them, “ and a weak Man can hardly make any  
“ Report

“ Report that is credible, of such Events as  
“ are miraculous.”

In answer then to this Objection I reply ;

1. That *extraordinary* or *miraculous* Events are, in the Nature of them, or as to the *Possibility* of their Existence, as credible as *ordinary* ; that is to say, it is as easy to conceive, that God hath *Power* to work a Miracle, and that in certain cases it may be *reasonable* and *fit* for him so to do ; as that he should execute any ordinary Act of his Providence. For as to *Power*, it is clear that he that at first established the Course of Nature, can as easily alter the Course of Nature : And if you say, that though God has *Power* to work Miracles, it is not credible that he ever *will* work them ; you must then shew it to be incredible, that God should upon any account alter the established Course of things (which I take to be impossible) and particularly you must shew (which is equally impossible) that it is incredible that God should at any time make any supernatural Revelations of his Will ; because granting the Credibility that God may make such Revelations, you must of course admit the Credibility of his working

ing Miracles, without which no such Revelations can be made. Whereas therefore the Objection sets forth, that "*Miracle* and *Nature* ; the *extraordinary* Acts of God, and the *ordinary* Transactions of Man, are things *totally different*," and thence *infers*, that we are "to suspend our Belief of the one, while on the *same Testimony* we grant it freely to the other ; and to require a different Degree of Evidence for each, in proportion to the different Degrees of their Credibility ;" the Conclusion is manifestly wrong. For this Reasoning supposes, that Miracles *as such* are *less credible*, than ordinary Events, which is not true ; for, in their Place and Order, they are both equally credible ; that is, it is just as credible that God should work Miracles in Testimony of his Prophets, as that he should send Rain and fruitful Seasons for the common Sustenance of Life. Extraordinary Events are supposed, in the very Notion of them, to be *less frequent* than ordinary ; but they are not therefore *less credible*. It is as credible that the *Plague* may be in *London* as that the *Small Pox* should be there. And yet the former is not near so *frequent* as the latter.



2. A Man's Senses are to *himself* as good Evidence of a Miracle as of an ordinary Event, that is of a Fact varying from the common Course of Nature, as of a Fact corresponding to it. I say, of a *Fact*; because the *Fact* is the only thing that can be judged of by Sense: Not of the *Power* by which that Fact is produced; which is a Matter of Reason and Speculation. The *Fact* then being supposed miraculous, a Man's Senses, I say, are as good Evidence of the Reality of such Fact, as they are of any ordinary or common Event. When I see a *Monster*, and when I see a *natural Birth*, my Eyes are as good Evidence in the one case as in the other; and so it is when I see a Man cured of Blindness or Lameness, whether it be done by natural Means or in a way that is supernatural. Therefore when I doubt of a matter that lies before me, be it ordinary or extraordinary, the Doubt must be, not whether I am to believe my Eyesight or not, but whether I am or am not some way so deceived, as to think I see what I really see not. If I see (or think I see) a Man at a Distance whom I presume to

to be in another Place, I may reasonably doubt, whether the Grounds of my Presumption of his being elsewhere be good, or whether it be he or some body very like him; but I can doubt of nothing else. So if I see an *Apparition*; I may doubt whether what presents itself to me has any real Existence, or whether the Appearance is not raised by some Disorder in the bodily Organ. But supposing it clear, that I see what I think I see, I can no longer doubt whether the thing exists; and this is true in all Cases; for *ordinary* or *extraordinary* can make no Difference. Therefore

3. A Person's *Veracity* supposed, his Report of an *extraordinary* Event is as good Evidence as his Report of an *ordinary* one, upon Supposition that there is Reason sufficient to believe, that he himself neither was nor could be imposed upon. Without this Circumstance, the Testimony of an honest Man, even in ordinary Matters, is not to be depended upon. If a Man should tell me that he was at such a Battle, and that ten thousand Men were slain on both Sides, it would be no Evidence, unless I saw Reason

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son to believe that he was qualified to judge of the Number of the Slain. In like manner, if an Historian should say in general Terms, that he saw such a one restore a blind Man to Sight by speaking a Word; I must also be satisfied, that he was qualified to know that the Man was blind, and that he afterwards saw, or it will not suffice. But the proper Circumstances supposed in each Case, the Evidence in either will be equally good.

I think the Objection allows this. For it says, that "the mere Honesty [of the Relator] will not warrant [the Belief of Miracles]"—True; nor the Belief of any thing else that I know of. But why? The Reason follows—"We require other Qualities in the Historian; a Degree of Knowledge, Experience, and Discernment, sufficient to judge of the whole Nature and Circumstances of the Case; and if any of these be wanting, we necessarily suspend our Belief." Right again; but what if *none* of these Circumstances are wanting? Have we not then

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 217.

leave

leave to say that the Evidence is good? Yes; but it is said, that when a weak Man reports a Miracle, we can *never* be certain that he was rightly qualified to judge of the Matter by him reported; because "a Suspicion will ALWAYS occur, that his Weakness and imperfect Knowledge of the Extent of human Art, had been imposed upon." This is calling in a Circumstance that hath nothing to do in the Question. What if a Man knows not the Extent of human Art; has not every one Experience and Discernment enough to know (for Instance) whether his Neighbour is blind or lame; or when a Cure in such Cases is wrought, is it not as easy for him to know that it was done by a Touch, or by a Word's speaking, as that it was done by natural Applications? There appears then to be no Foundation for the Assertion, that "the same Authority that may be trusted in the Report of *ordinary* Events, may not be trusted in the Report of *extraordinary* ones." You cannot (with Safety) trust a Man in his Report of the most common thing, unless his Testimony be properly circumstanced. And if it is so circum-



circumstanced that you cannot reasonably deny him Credit, when he reports things of ordinary Occurrence; why is it not as reasonable, with the same Circumstances, to believe the same Man, when he tells you of extraordinary Matters? True it is that Mankind (generally) are not so readily disposed to believe Reports of extraordinary things, as they are to believe Reports of ordinary ones. For we are very apt to consider a thing as *impossible*, the like to which we have never seen or heard: And hence it is, that Reports of such Matters are admitted with Difficulty, though supported by the best Authority. Common Events, on the other hand, reconcile themselves to us by their Familiarity; and the Reports of these (especially when they are not interesting) we are ready to admit upon the slightest Grounds. But surely it is very absurd to lay that down as a Rule of Judgment, which is the mere Effect of human Weakness and Partiality, and the very Reason why we are so often mistaken or imposed upon. If any one should (according to our Author's Rule) "*admit of course the*" Report of common Events, *without a* "*strong*

"*strong Reason to suspect them;*" in what a Multitude of Instances must he be deceived? For how many Reports do we hear every Day, which though false, we have yet no Reason to suspect? He would as surely (though not so often) be in the wrong, should he refuse to admit Reports of extraordinary things, though supported by the same Authority upon which he admits common Facts. *Ordinary* and *extraordinary* are such in respect only of our own Knowledge and Experience; and do you think it reasonable to reject common Authority, unless the Matter attested falls in with your own Observation? Those who have themselves never been in foreign Countries, have nothing but common Authority to acquaint them with the great Variety of Plants and Animals, of which we knew nothing here. And yet to question such things, though attested by the gravest Witnesses, would surely be a most senseless Scepticism. In short; it is with things *ordinary* and *extraordinary* as it is with things *interesting* and *not interesting*. We are, and ought to be, more *scrupulous* upon what *Grounds* we believe, in the one Case, than in the other. If a Person of Credit

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should tell you, that such a one (a common Acquaintance) was dead ; you would possibly believe him without Hesitation. But if the same Man should tell you, that your *Father*, or your *Friend* is dead ; you would be apt to make strict Enquiry, upon what Authority he reports it. But the Reason of this is, that in this latter Case you want to be sure that you *have* the proper Evidence ; not, that the *same* Evidence will not do in *both*.

The Result is this ; that in things which are to be received upon Testimony (of which sort are all Facts, whether common or extraordinary, for which we have not the Evidence of our Senses) the Nature of the thing testified, and the Quality of the Witnesses are to be considered. If the thing testified is in the Nature of it credible, and the Witnesses are qualified to judge of the Truth of it, so as that we may be secure they could not themselves be deceived in what they report ; their *Veracity* supposed, such Testimony is to be admitted ; and this in things extraordinary as well as ordinary : For the one as well as the other may be both credible in themselves, and so circumstanced that we may be very secure  
that

that the Witnesses themselves could not have been deceived. There is no other plain Rule of Judgment than this; whatever over-curious Speculations may have been raised upon this Subject, not (we may be sure) for Instruction, but to puzzle the Understandings of Men. The *Veracity* of the Apostles then (for the present) supposed; we are to consider, whether the Miracles of *Christ* are so reported, that, we may be secure, they neither were nor could have been imposed upon. The Author, whose Reasoning I have now been rescuing from the Hands of Unbelievers (which, by the way, is more than he thought fit to do himself) says, that “mean and simple Men, “as the Apostles were—their Knowledge “of the Facts which they relate, scarce “admits the Probability of a Mistake;” which how it will stand with his general Principles, it is more his Business to shew than mine. But the Assertion is true, whoever says it; as I shall now undertake to prove. To speak distinctly to every Miracle recorded in the New Testament, would be endless as well as needless. I shall think it sufficient to examine the great and closing Miracle, our Saviour’s RESURRECTION,



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which may serve as a Pattern for all the rest.

Before it can be known that *Christ* was raised from the Dead, it must be known that he was both *alive* and *dead*; and in neither of these Points could the Authors of our Saviour's History possibly have been mistaken. For they were some of them (as the Story says) his immediate Disciples and Followers, who constantly attended him during the Course of his Ministry; so that they had all the Evidence of his being a *living* Man, that any one has or can have that there is a living Man upon Earth besides himself. Of his *Death* there can be as little question. For he was crucified by the *Roman* Governor in the Sight of all the People, among whom were his nearest Relations and Friends, who took care of his Body after he was taken down from the Cross, and with the usual Preparations laid it in the Grave. What Evidence have we that any Man in the World ever died greater than this? But how did they did know that he was afterwards alive? Why, in the same way that you know your Child, or your Friend, or your Acquaintance, to be alive. They *saw* him, and this not by  
one

one transient View, as you may see a *Ghost* or *Apparition*, but they saw him *often*; they *ate* with him, they *conversed* with him, for *forty Days* together. If you admit the *Veracity* of the Apostles, these Circumstances must be admitted; and if this was not Evidence to them that he was alive, you can have no Evidence that there is any Man upon Earth now living. The Apostles knew *Christ* to be alive before he was crucified, because they saw and conversed with him. They neither had nor could have had any greater Evidence than this. And were not their Senses, when they saw and conversed with him in the same manner after his Crucifixion, as good Evidence that he was then alive, as that he was alive before? If not, tell me how you know any Man to be alive, whom you saw and conversed with four or five Days ago. Must not your Answer be, that you see and converse with him *now*, in like manner as you did four or five Days ago? Have you, *can* you have, any greater Evidence than this? Where now is the Difference between these two Cases? Why, *Christ* was dead in the intermediate Space. The *Man* (we will suppose) was alive and elsewhere

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about his Business. This is a great Difference indeed ; but the Difference affects not the Argument. For the Evidence has no kind of Dependance upon what happened in the *intermediate* Space, but stands entirely upon this, that the same Object is in the same manner presented to your Senses *now*, in which it was presented to you four or five Days ago. Instead of supposing the Man to have been awake, and about his Business during the Interval, you may, if you please, suppose him to have been *asleep* ; and the Argument will stand just as it does. By the same Rule you may also suppose him to have been *dead* ; for between *dead* and *asleep*, in this Case, there is no Difference.

You might then, if you saw Cause, dispute the Truth of this Circumstance, that *Christ* was seen by and conversed with his Disciples and Friends, after his Crucifixion and Death, in the manner reported by the Evangelists ; but, this Circumstance admitted (as the Nature of the Argument requires it should be admitted) there will be no Sense in asking, whether *Christ* was really alive, or whether his Apostles were not imposed upon. You may as well question  
your

your own Senses, and ask, whether all that you see and hear about you, is not Dream and Delusion. If you say, that *all* the Miracles of *Christ* are not thus circumstantially recorded, you will say what is very true, but what will do you little Service: For give me but this one Miracle, and I will not ask your Leave to take the rest. If *Christ* was really raised from the Dead, the Miracles which he did in his Life-time will then be in themselves both credible and probable; and the Presumption will lie, that the Apostles, who did not believe the one till after they had received the strongest Proof of the Truth of the Fact, observed the like Caution in respect of the other also.

We have now therefore brought the Question to the Point of the *Veracity* of the Apostles; and we are to *prove* what has hitherto only been *supposed*, that they were sincere Men, and have faithfully reported what they knew of these Matters. Against this a general Prejudice has been raised by Unbelievers, who pretend that upon the very Face of the History of *Christ's* Miracles there appears such Inconsistencies and Contrarieties, as plainly shew, that the



Authors either did not know what they were writing about ; or that they did not honestly and fairly report it. This Part of the Question has been largely discussed in the late Controversy with Mr. *Woolston* ; and the History of the *Resurrection*, in particular, has been so fully justified by two eminent Writers<sup>r</sup>, as to make it perfectly needless for me to say any thing to it at present. Laying aside then this Prejudice, let us attend to the general Character of the Apostles ; in which there is nothing that would lead one to suspect them as guilty of unfair dealing, but much to persuade us of the contrary. They were plain, artless Men ; their Principles were strictly moral ; their Conduct clear of all just Imputation ; and the things which they report (extraordinary as they are) are not reported as having been done in Corners, but openly and in the Face of the World. These are the Circumstances upon which the Faith of all History stands ; and if we had nothing to say of the Apostles more than this, it would be very hard to assign a good Reason why their Testimony is not to be received. But the strong Circumstance which

<sup>r</sup> The present Lord Bishop of *London*, and Mr. *West*.  
disting-

distinguishes their Testimony from all other human Testimony is this, that here was a new Doctrine, a new Religion, raised up on the Credit of these Facts, which the Apostles embraced and professed, not only without all present Encouragement from worldly Advantages, but in utter Renunciation of them all; under the manifest Peril of their Lives, which they were all ready to sacrifice, and which many of them did actually sacrifice, for the Gospel sake. It is, I say, upon this Circumstance, that the Weight of the Apostles Testimony principally rests; and I am under no doubt that this was at least one very great Reason why it pleased God that his Church should be founded upon the Blood of Martyrs, that their Patience and Constancy might stand as a Testimony to future Ages, of the Truth and Certainty of the things which they were to record. I think our Saviour intimates as much, *Luke xxi. 13.* where having mentioned the Persecutions which his Apostles were to suffer for his Name's sake, he adds—*and it shall turn unto you for a TESTIMONY.* But because Unbelievers are wont to make light of this Circumstance, and the Author of the *Free Enquiry*

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*Enquiry* has given countenance to the Contempt too often thrown upon it, by laying it down universally, and without any kind of Distinction, that "Martyrdom ought not to give any additional Weight to the Authority of a Christian Witness;" it will be necessary to see how this Matter stands. And I think we need only to place the Argument upon its true Bottom, to make the Force of it felt by every common Understanding.

It must be remembered then, that the Argument goes upon a Supposition already proved and not to be denied, that if the several Circumstances under which the Apostles have recorded our Saviour's Miracles be true, they could not possibly have *themselves* been deceived; and that the Question is now reduced to the single Point of their *Veracity*. Which Observation discharges from the present Question the single Reason offered by the Author, in support of his general Assertion, that "Martyrdom gives no additional Weight to the Authority of a Christian Witness:" For thus he argues: "Martyrdom—adds nothing to the Cha-

*Free Inquiry*, p. 200.

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“racter of [a Man’s] *Knowledge* or *Sagacity*; nor consequently any Weight to [his] Testimony, in preference to that of any other just and devout Christian whatsoever.” What has *Knowledge* and *Sagacity* to do in a Case, in which it is *supposed* impossible that a Man could be deceived? If it were an agreed Point, that the Apostles might have been so imposed upon, as to have believed that *Christ* wrought Miracles when in reality he wrought none; it shall be granted, that their suffering Martyrdom is no Evidence, as to the *Fact*, whether *Christ* wrought Miracles or not; for Men may suffer, and often have suffered, Martyrdom for false Opinions as well as for true ones. But taking it for granted, I say, that the Apostles could not have been deceived as to the Facts by them reported, their suffering Martyrdom will be Evidence for the Truth of such Facts, as I will now endeavour to shew.

It must be admitted then in the first place, that the Constancy of the Apostles gives full Proof of *their own* Conviction, that *Christ*

<sup>†</sup> Ibid. p. 213.



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was a Prophet, and his Doctrine the Will and Law of God. For as Men we must suppose them to have had the common Sentiments of Men ; and that therefore it was impossible for them to expose themselves to Persecution and Death, but upon some Motive that was sufficient to outweigh the present Sufferings. What should this Motive be? Suppose them to have been persuaded, that *Christ* came to them in the Name and by the Authority of God, and you have it plainly before you. *Every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father or Mother, or Wife or Children, or Lands, for my Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and inherit EVERLASTING LIFE. Matt. xix. 29.* To forego a present Good, to receive by and by an hundredfold ; to give up the Advantages of this short and perishing State, in order to obtain an everlasting Inheritance in a State yet to come, is undoubtedly a very reasonable Conduct. But if these were vain Promises (and such they must to them have appeared, if they had not believed *Christ* to have been a true Prophet) the Motive was lost ; and they acted a Part of

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which no History affords an Example. It is too common a Case for Men to act insincerely to *save* to themselves the Advantages of this World; but to suppose that any one should be willing to give up Life, and all the Advantages of it, merely for the sake of telling a Lye, or upon some future Prospect in which he hath no Confidence himself; is a Contradiction to all that we know and feel of what is human. In common Cases, if a Man should lay a Wager of Half a Crown, you would not thence conclude him to be in the right, but you would certainly believe him to be in earnest. Will you believe a Man to be in earnest when he stakes a Trifle, and will you not believe the Apostles to have been in earnest when they risked their ALL! *Lo!* (say they) *we have left all and followed thee*—What did they follow him for? *Something* they expected in the way of Recompence; for they presently cry out—*What shall we have therefore?* Matt. xix. 27. It is not unlikely that when the Apostles asked this Question, they had a View to some earthly Reward; for their first Notion of *Christ's Kingdom* was that it should be *temporal*. But this makes

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no Difference in the Argument; for still it must be supposed that they believed in *Christ*, whose Word, if he was not what he pretended to be, could have been no Security for any Reward whether temporal or spiritual. But their Master told them, and Experience soon convinced them, that there was nothing for them to hope for in this World; yet still they follow him to the Loss of all things, and even unto Death itself; and if this will not prove that they believed in *Christ*, no Conduct in the World can shew any Man's Belief. It hath all the Strength of Evidence that human Nature can possibly give.

Thus far then we go upon safe Grounds; and it appears by the Conduct of the Apostles, that they must have been *themselves* fully satisfied of the Truth of *Christ's* Pretensions, that he was a Prophet of God, and in consequence of this Assurance, had the firmest Reliance upon the Promises that were offered to Mankind by the Gospel. The Author of the *Free Enquiry* consents to this. For speaking of the primitive Christians, he confesses that "the Circumstances of their [suffering] Martyr-

"Martyrdom gave the STRONGEST  
"PROOF of the SINCERITY of their  
"FAITH, and TRUST in the Promises of  
"the Gospel". It is with great Reason that  
he says this; for no other Cause can be ad-  
equate to such an Effect; and all the Mo-  
tives,\* which he hath industriously sug-  
gested (seemingly) in Disparagement of  
this Conduct, resolve themselves at last into  
this one Principle, that the Gospel, both  
by the Martyrs themselves, and by all the  
Christian World about them, was most  
firmly believed to be true.—Here then arises  
a very material Question: How came  
the Apostles by this *firm Persuasion*, that  
*Christ* was sent of God, and that great Pro-  
phet whom the ancient Prophets had fore-  
told? The Point lies quite out of the way  
of all *natural* Inquiry; from *natural* Princi-  
ples therefore they could not have had it.  
Nor could they have had it from any *reli-*  
*gious* Principles, as formed merely upon the  
Authority of their own Books. In Chri-  
stian Countries where the Scriptures are  
read, it frequently happens, that Men take  
up Opinions from their own private Inter-

\*Ibid. p. 213.

\*See p. 200 to 212.

pretations,



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pretations, in which they are so fully convinced that they are in the right, that they would (many of them) lay down their Lives rather than give up their Opinions. But this, I say, could not have been the Case of the Apostles, in respect of their Faith in *Christ* as the Messiah. For their History (to which, in the present Argument, we challenge no greater Regard than is due to any common History) shews, that when *Christ* first appeared, they were full of the common Prejudices of their Countrymen in this respect; which were as opposite to the Pretensions of *Christ* as Light is to Darkneſs. What was it then (I ask) that bore down this Weight of Prejudice, and convinced them that *Christ's* Pretensions were true? Most plainly (for it could be nothing else) it was the *Evidence* which *Christ* gave of his divine Mission by the Miracles which he wrought. By this it was, that all were convinced, who were at first convinced. Our Saviour challenged their Attention upon this Evidence, *John* xiv. 11. *Believe me for the Works sake.* *Nicodemus* declares himself convinced by this Evidence; *Rabbi, we know that thou art*

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and a Teacher come from God; for no Man can do those Miracles that thou dost; except God be with him. John iii. 2. And to the two Disciples going to Emmaus, found the Trust they had, that Christ was he that should have redeemed Israel; in this, that he was a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God and all the People. Luke xxiv. 19. 21. Lay then the whole Matter together (if you please) thus—The Constancy of the Apostles shews their firm Reliance upon the Hopes of the Gospel; this implies their full Conviction of the Truth of the Evidence upon which they had received the Gospel; and this Evidence having been founded in plain Matters of Fact, in which they could not be deceived, 7. a. in the Miracles which they saw wrought by Jesus Christ; the same Constancy which shews the Sincerity of their Faith, will likewise prove the Truth of the Miracles; and the Evidence will come with the greater Force, in proportion as a Man's suffering for his Opinions is a better Evidence of his Sincerity, than the simple Character of an honest Man.

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Thus stood the Case with respect to the Apostles. They suffered for a Faith which *could* have had no other Foundation, than those Miracles which they saw with their Eyes; which creates such a *Connexion* between the *Sincerity* of their Faith, and the *Truth* of the *Facts* upon which their Faith was grounded, that if you admit one you must admit both. This Consideration opens a great Difference between the Testimony of the Apostles for the Truth of *Christ's* Miracles, and the Testimony of many other primitive Martyrs for the Truth of Miracles by them reported to have been wrought in After-times. For these are seldom so distinctly related, that we may be secure, that the Relators themselves might not have been imposed upon; and those of them which seem to be most unexceptionable, still differ in this Circumstance, that they were not the *Foundation* upon which the Faith of the Martyrs stood. If there were any Miracles wrought in later times (of which, notwithstanding what has been attempted to prove the contrary, I must beg leave to say there is great Appearance)

pearance) such Miracles would serve for the greater Confirmation of the Faith, as they were visible Instances of that Power which was manifested in *Christ*. But the Faith of those times did not *principally* rest upon such Miracles, but upon the Miracles wrought by *Christ* and his Apostles, as they stood recorded in the New Testament ; which would have been a sufficient Foundation if no other Miracles had been wrought afterwards. These primitive Martyrs then, having a *Foundation* for their Religion, as Christians, *distinct* from the Miracles of their own times, it is easy to be conceived, that, as Miracles wrought in favour of a Religion do Honour to that Religion ; those who had embraced the Gospel upon the Credit of the Scripture Miracles, might possibly have been ready enough to admit and give countenance to Stories of later Miracles, which stood upon no sufficient Authority ; for which Reason there will be no necessary Connection between the Sincerity of *their* Faith (which is all that their Martyrdom directly proves) and the Truth of the Miracles by them reported. But if the Miracles wrought by *Christ* had not

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been true, the Apostles, who had no *other* Foundation for their Faith, could have had *none*; which yet their constant, patient Suffering for *Christ's* sake, plainly shews that they had.

Whether there were or were not any Miracles wrought after the Days of *Christ* and his Apostles, is no Part of the present Argument. But this I confess, that the many idle and ridiculous Stories about Miracles, that are to be met with in the Writings of some of the Fathers, are both a Reproach to themselves, and a Discredit to the Cause of Religion in general. Those who love to place their Characters in the most unfavourable Light, will charge them with Dishonesty; for which however I have not yet seen any sufficient Proof. But the soberest and most candid Writers have not been able to excuse them (as, in Truth, they are not to be excused) from great Credulity in this respect: And what is there so natural as for those Unbelievers, who having no Inclination to go to the Bottom of the Question, are willing to satisfy themselves with a short Answer, to say—"Look  
" here! By your own Confession, Num-  
" bers

“ bers of Miracles have been reported to  
“ have been wrought, and have obtained  
“ Credit in the World, which yet had no-  
“ thing to support them but the *mere Cre-*  
“ *dulity* of those who reported them and  
“ those who received them; and why  
“ might not this have been the Case in  
“ the times of *Christ* and the Apostles?”  
The Author of the *Free Enquiry* has  
given too much handle to this sort of  
Reasoning, by saying, that “ the princi-  
“ pal Fathers of the fourth [Century] were  
“ LESS CREDULOUS than their Predecessors  
“ of the earlier Ages.” From whence  
somebody or other may be ready enough to  
draw this Inference—therefore *less Regard*  
is to be paid to Reports of Miracles by  
the Writers of the *preceding* Centuries,  
than to the like Reports from Writers of  
the *fourth*; not excepting even the Apo-  
stolic Age, as the Author excepts it not.  
He does not tell us upon what Grounds he  
asserts, that the Fathers of the *fourth* Cen-  
tury were less credulous upon the Point of  
Miracles than their Predecessors of the *ear-*  
*lier* Ages; and the Reason of the Case car-

ries it the other way. For if Credulity begets Miracles; where Credulity most abounds, Miracles should most abound. But, contrary to this, the Fact is, that the Miracles recorded by the Fathers of the second and third Centuries, bear no proportion in number to those that are recorded by the Fathers of the fourth and fifth. And is not the reason clear? Credulity is ever attended with some favourite Prejudice, which breeds and nourishes it. Men are not credulous *against* themselves, or their own Opinions. Miracles wrought in favour of Christianity, are (as I have said) an Honour to Christianity; and consequently till Christianity got into some Reputation, Credulity could do nothing towards giving Credit to false Miracles. During the second and third Centuries, the Church was under Persecutions; and Christianity had Credit only among the few that professed it. In the Beginning of the fourth, Christianity gained the Establishment of human Laws, and had all the Reputation that Authority and Fashion could give it. Within this Century likewise many Corruptions had grown up. Martyrs and Saints began to be

be treated with an Honour little less than idolatrous, to which the Miracles said to have been wrought at their Tombs, or by their Reliques, though it did not give a sufficient *Sanction*, gave, no doubt, great *Countenance* with many. Monks had likewise spread itself far and wide; and the Fame which these Recluses had for their great Sanctity, prepared the Multitude greedily to swallow whatever extraordinary Matters, Minds almost distracted <sup>2</sup> by Fast-

<sup>2</sup> Mr. *Tournefort*, speaking of the modern *Asceticks*, or *Hermits*, of the *Greek Church*, says, “that the great Austerities by them practised, joined to a perpetual Solitude, very often turn their Brains; and that by little and little their Heads grow so full of Visions, that they are little better than distracted.” *Voyage to the Levant*, Vol. I. p. 84. One may easily suppose this to have been the Case of *Antony*, *Hilarion*, and many others.

“If a Patient grows light-headed [in a Fever] he is presently looked upon as possessed by the Devil; the Physicians and Surgeons are dismissed, and the *Papa's* sent for to exorcise him, who fall to repeating I know not what Prayers, and almost drown the Patient with Holy Water.—At *Mycone* a Woman was sick—whom they threatened to bury quick, if she did not declare the Name of the Demon that possessed her.—The Issue was—she died con-



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ings, and Watchings, and Austerities of various other kinds, might fancy to themselves. These Considerations will pretty well account for the great Noise of Miracles that prevailed in those Ages; in which if now and then a Miracle was wrought (for I shall not presume to say, because I see no Reason to say, that absolutely none were wrought) Numbers of idle and groundless Reports of a like sort might hastily gain Credit, as, we daily see, it happens in other Cases. But all this will nothing affect the Apostolic Age, when Credulity had nothing to work upon; the Prejudices, the Passions, and the Interests, as well of those who reported the Miracles of *Christ*, as of those to whom they were reported, lying not in favour of Christianity, but in Opposition to it. In short, there is a wide Difference, in this respect, between Miracles when offered to our Belief as the *Foundation* of a Religion yet to be taken up; and Miracles when offered to our Belief in favour of a Religion *already embraced* and

“vulged; but whenever any one recovers in such a Case, the People cry—*a Miracle!* and the *Papa's* go for Wonder-workers.” *Id. ibid.* p. 134.

professed.

professed. In this latter Case, whatever comes in Aid to Religion, flatters our preconceived Opinions, and is apt to be admitted sometimes upon slender Authority. But in the former, nothing will convince reasonable Men but the strongest Evidence of Fact, especially if any thing is to be lost by such Profession; which was eminently the Case of the Apostles, and first Christians, to whom their Religion was the Loss of every thing.

There is one Circumstance more, which gives a Degree of Authority to the Miracles of *Christ* and his Apostles, which few Miracles of later Ages can challenge, viz. that they were all wrought openly, in the Face of the World, among the *Jews*, the professed and most bitter Enemies to *Christ's* Pretensions, who, it may be presumed, were not wanting in any Endeavours to convict him of Imposture, if they had been able to have done it, and which if they had effectually done, he must have fell into universal Contempt. Some of the earliest Miracles after *Christ*, whilst the Church was yet under Persecution, may perhaps claim the

Benefit

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Benefit of this Plea (for some of the ancient Apologists make bold Appeals in their Writings) and so far as they *can*, I see no Reason why they should not be admitted. But after the whole *Roman* Empire became Christian, the Case was altered greatly. The Miracles then wrought must have been wrought not in the Face of *Enemies*, but (chiefly at least) among *Friends*; some of which (when Superstition began to prevail against common Honesty) might be disposed to *invent* or *contrive*, what the Credulity of others made them ready to believe and propagate.

But let thus much suffice for the present on this Head, and let us go on to another Observation, not less material, which is, that as the Gospel wants not the Aid of any Miracles of later times to establish its Authority; so neither will the Supposition of Miracles, wrought since *Christ* and his Apostles, establish any Doctrines or Practices as of divine Authority, *other* than those which are contained in the holy Scriptures: Which is a proper Caution to those, who, believing the Miracles of later Ages, but seeing the Falseness  
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hood of many Doctrines then received in the Church; may think this a Disparagement to the Evidence from Miracles, as offered by *Christ* and his Apostles. For it may be asked—If admitting the Miracles of later Ages, you yet renounce the Doctrines of these Ages; why, admitting the Miracles of *Christ*, are you bound to receive the Doctrines of *Christ*? It will be necessary to take this Point into Consideration; especially as the Author now before us has advanced, that if we allow Miracles to have been wrought in the corrupted Ages of the Church, we must take the Corruptions along with them; and I hope to do it in such a way, as to save both the Credit of Miracles, considered as Evidence for *Christ*'s Doctrines; and the Credit of History too, so far as upon other Accounts it may appear to deserve Credit.

And in the first place, I see no cause to depart from what I have formerly advanced, *viz.* that “it is never reasonable to consider the Miracles wrought in any Age, as Confirmations of the concurrent Usages or Doctrines of that Age, unless  
“there



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“there be some Circumstance which specifies the Intention of the Worker, and shews that the Miracles are meant to authorise such Usages or Doctrines<sup>a</sup>.” Because, as various Ends or Purposes may be conceived, why a Miracle may be wrought; if there be nothing to shew precisely *what* the End is, nothing certain can be concluded. When a Person comes in the Name of God, and publishes a Doctrine as from him; a Power of working Miracles attendant upon such Pretension, must be construed as an Attestation of that Doctrine; the Pretension itself sufficiently pointing out the Use of the Miracle. And as this was the Case of *Moses*, who began with opening his Commission to the People of *Israel*, *The Lord God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you<sup>b</sup>*; so it was also the Case of *Christ* and his Apostles. *Christ* came in *his Father's Name*, and his Mission was publickly declared by a Voice from Heaven, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

<sup>a</sup> *Obs. on Dr. M.'s Introductory Disc.* p. 8.

<sup>b</sup> *Exod.* iii. 15. comp. with *Chap.* iv. 30.

Matt. iii. 17. The Apostles were sent under the Aids of the Holy Ghost; and their Mission was also declared by *Christ*, to whom they were appointed Successors in the prophetic Office, in as full and ample a manner as he himself had been sent of the Father. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* John xx. 21. In consequence hereof, all the Miracles wrought by these Prophets, in the Execution of their respective Missions, were Attestations of the Matters by them delivered and declared to be the Will and Law of God. But had neither *Moses*, nor *Christ*, nor his Apostles, declared or published any thing *in the Name* of God, nor pretended to any Authority or Commission from him; the Miracles which they wrought would have been no Vouchers for the Truth of any Opinions by them held, or Usages by them observed and maintained; because there would in such a case be room to suppose, that those miraculous Powers might have been granted for some other Purposes, subservient to the Benefit of particular Men, or to the general Ends of Providence<sup>c</sup>.

<sup>c</sup> Compare this with what has been said above, upon the general Subject of Miracles.

To shew that I am not singular in this Opinion, I will give you the Sense of two very able Writers. The first is Mr. *Locke*, who says, that “divine Revelation receives  
 “Testimony from no other Miracles, but  
 “such as are wrought to witness HIS  
 “MISSION from God, who delivers the  
 “Revelation. All other Miracles that are  
 “done in the World, how many or great  
 “soever, Revelation is not concerned in.”  
 Hence he rejects all the Miracles wrought in the Heathen World, as of no Use in Revelation. For (proceeds he) “I do not  
 “remember any Miracles recorded in the  
 “Greek or Roman Writers, as done to confirm any one’s Mission and Doctrine—  
 “For though there were here and there  
 “some Pretences to Revelation, yet there  
 “were not so much as Pretences to Miracles that attested it.” But most full to this point is Bishop *Fleetwood*, who speaking of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, whom some of the ancient heathen Writers confronted to *Jesus Christ*; and having (for Argument’s sake) admitted the Truth of the Miracles

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reported

reported of him by *Philostratus*; asks—  
“What will follow? That *Apollonius*’s Religion is true? What was it? Where is it to be found? Give us an Account of the Theology he taught and designed to plant and propagate. No such thing appears, even in *Philostratus*.” He goes on and says farther—“If you will believe *Philostratus*, he [*Apollonius*] wrought many Miracles, but he valued himself nothing on this account, but attributed them all to God; and says no more, than that so many People as were the Subjects of his Miracles were benefited by them. He wrought none to testify that any God had sent him; and he drew no Consequences in favour of any thing he had said, from any thing he had done. He called not upon his Works, to prove the Truth of his Mission or his Doctrine.” From hence the Bishop’s Argument is, that admitting *Apollonius*’s Miracles, they cannot stand in Derogation to the Miracles of *Jesus Christ*; because *Apollonius* pretending to no divine Mission, his Miracles established nothing. The Reasoning holds in



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all like Cases, and may be applied, and ought to be applied, to all the living Men who are reported to have wrought Miracles in the Christian Church, since the Days of Christ and his Apostles; who not appearing in the Character of extraordinary Messengers from God, but at most as Persons authorized to minister in the Church, built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the head Corner Stone; such Miracles cannot authorize, as of divine Authority, any Doctrines or Practices, by them held or maintained, which are not established as such by the original Commission, that is, which are not contained in Scripture.

But the Miracles with which we are principally concerned, perhaps, are those which are reported to have been wrought, not by living Men, but by mere material Instruments, as the Bones or other Reliques of dead Martyrs, the Sign of the Cross, consecrated Oil, and the like; concerning which, the Opinion of the Author of the *Free Enquiry* is, that if we admit the Miracles to have been wrought, we must admit

admit the superstitious Worship paid to those Instruments, as of divine Authority. But upon what reasonable Foot can this Opinion be maintained? Will the Author pretend to say, that the mere Relation of any thing to a Miracle, as its Instrument, is a Reason why such Instrument ought to be worshipped? In effect he *hath* said it. For having observed, that “ it was the principal  
“ Devotion of the fourth Century, in all  
“ Cases of Sickness or Distress, to fly to  
“ the Tombs of the Martyrs; grounded on  
“ a general Persuasion, that by prostrating  
“ themselves before their Reliques, espe-  
“ cially by touching them, they should  
“ find present Cure and Relief; and that  
“ great Numbers are affirmed by the Fa-  
“ thers to have been cured in this manner of  
“ all sorts of Diseases, and several to have  
“ been raised even from the Dead;” he adds—“ Now it is certain from the Expe-  
“ rience of all Ages, that the Attestation  
“ and Belief of such miraculous Cures  
“ never had any other Effect, or were  
“ understood to have any other Mean-  
“ ing, than to imprint an Opinion of a *di-*  
“ *vine Virtue* in the Reliques, AND CON-

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“ SEQUENTLY

“SEQUENTLY TO AUTHORIZE THE  
 “WORSHIP which was paid them.” It  
 is most infallibly true, that if Miracles  
 were really wrought by Reliques, such Mi-  
 racles neither had, nor could have had, any  
 other Effect, than to imprint an Opinion  
 of a *divine Virtue* in the Reliques; I mean  
 (as the Author, I suppose, desires to be  
 understood) in a *popular* way of speaking.  
 For *strictly*, the miraculous Virtue is in  
 God, not in the Relique, which God uses as an  
 Instrument, not *effective* but *introduc-*  
*tive* only; as Moses’s Rod, the Word or  
 the Hands of Christ, and the like. But  
 the Question is, whether the Supposi-  
 tion of a divine Virtue in a Relique, is a  
 Reason why that Relique ought to be wor-  
 shipped. In the Author’s Judgment it  
 should seem so to be. For the *Authority*  
 of the *Worship* stands manifestly connected  
 with the *divine Virtue* supposed to be in the  
 Relique, as a *Consequence* from its *Principle*;  
 though whether his Meaning is, that it is a  
 Consequence founded in the Nature and  
 Reason of the thing, or in the Opinion of  
 Mankind only, may be questioned; for the

*Remarks on Observations, &c. p. 22.*

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Turn of the Expression is somewhat ambiguous. What occurs a few Lines after, may perhaps help to explain it. For he says, that *the Worship [of Reliques] MUST FOR EVER FOLLOW the Belief of such Cures.* Why *must* it follow, and *forever* follow, unless it be because the one is a just and rational Conclusion from the other? But let the Author challenge which Sense he pleases, there is no Truth in what he says. For as to any just, *legitimate* Consequence, that, because Miracles are wrought by Reliques as Instruments, therefore those Reliques may be worshipped, there is plainly none. You may as well say, that because Miracles are wrought by *Men* as Instruments, therefore those *Men* may be worshipped. But even the Heathens at *Lystra* did not draw such a foolish Inference as this. They would have worshipped *Paul* and *Barnabas* when they saw the Cure that they wrought upon the lame Man; but it was because they thought them to be *Gods in the Likeness of Men*, Acts xiv. 11. Again, as to *Fact*, it is not true what the Author so roundly and positively asserts, that “the Worship of



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“ [Reliques or such like Instruments] did  
 “ immediately follow the Belief of Cures  
 “ wrought by them.” All History is  
 against him in this Point. In the Old Testa-  
 ment we find that a *dead Man* was *raised*  
*to Life* again, by *touching the Bones of Eli-*  
*sha* <sup>s</sup>. But we no where read, that these  
 Bones were ever worshipped. So *Moses's*  
 brazen Serpent wrought Cures <sup>h</sup>; yet was  
 it no Idol in *Moses's* time, nor for some  
 hundreds of Years after. Again, in the  
 Days of *Christ* and his Apostles, Cures  
 were wrought by touching the *Hem*, or  
*Border*, of our Saviour's Garment; and  
 by *Handkerchiefs*, or *Aprons*, carried to  
 the Sick from the Body of *Paul* <sup>i</sup>; yet were  
 not *Garments*, or *Aprons*, or *Handker-*  
*chiefs* worshipped. Further yet; does not  
 the Author know, that the Opinion of a  
*divine Virtue* in the *Sign of the Cross* was  
 much older than *Cross Worship*? Does he  
 not tell us himself, “ that it was thought a  
 “ sure Preservative against all sorts of Mal-  
 “ lignity, Poisons, &c. and that it is affirm-

<sup>a</sup> 2 Kings xlii. 21. <sup>h</sup> Numb. xxi. 9. 2 Kings  
 xviii. 4. <sup>i</sup> Matt. ix. 20. Acts xix. 12.

“ed, by the principal Fathers of the fourth  
“Century, to have wrought many illustri-  
“ous Miracles<sup>k</sup>?” And yet he does not  
pretend to charge it upon the fourth Cen-  
tury, that they *worshipped* the Cross. Last-  
ly, does he not say, that from *Tertullian’s*  
and *Cyprian’s* Days, the *consecrated Bread*  
“began to work Miracles, and was carried  
“by People in their Journeys and Voyages,  
“as an Amulet or Charm, to secure them  
“from all Dangers both by Sea and Land?”  
And yet it is well known, that the *Worship*  
of the sacramental Elements did not come  
in till many Centuries after. Almost all  
Corruptions work by Degrees; and so  
did that particular Corruption of which  
we are now speaking. When a divine  
Virtue to cure Diseases was supposed to be  
in any Relique, it is natural to think, that  
such a Relique would be carefully preserv-  
ed, properly deposited, and treated with  
all outward Circumstances of Respect. So  
the primitive Christians treated the Bones  
of *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, as the Acts of  
their Martyrdom shew. But one of those

<sup>k</sup> *Introd. Disc. p. 19.*

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Acts expressly disclaims <sup>1</sup> all *Worship* paid to Martyrs or their Reliques, and gives it

<sup>1</sup> Οὐτε τὸν χρεὶν ποιεῖ καὶ ἀληθεῖς διωκόμεθα ἕτερον τινα σέβειν. Τέτοιον μὲν γὰρ ἡμεῖς τῷ Θεῷ προσκυνῶμεν· τὰς δὲ μαρτύρας ὡς μαθητὰς καὶ μιμητὰς τῷ Κυρίῳ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀξίως. Epist. Eccl.

Smryn. de Mart. Polycarp. § 17. If Jerom and Au-

gustine are to be credited, the Case was the same in

their time, for they write exactly in the same Strain

*Non sit vobis Religio cultus hominum mortuorum; quia*

*se pie vixerunt, non sic habentur ut tales quærant Hono-*

*res: Sed ILLUM a nobis coli volunt, quo illuminante, læ-*

*tantur meriti sui nos esse consortes. HONORANDI ergo*

*sunt propter imitationem, non ADORANDI propter Re-*

*ligionem. Augustin. de vera Religione, cap. lv. Non*

*Martyrum Reliquias—COLIMUS & ADORAMUS, ne*

*serviamus Creaturæ potius quam Creatori—HONORA-*

*MUS autem Reliquias Martyrum ut EUM CUIUS sunt*

*Martyres adoremus. Honoramus servos ut honor servor-*

*um redundet ad Dominum. Hieron. ad Vigilantium.*

The Author of the *Free Enquiry* acknowledges this

Passage of Jerom, and says, that it “is but the

“same trifling Distinction, with which the Romanists

“defend the same Practices at this Day, and shift off

“the Charge of Idolatry which is urged against them.”

*Postscr. p. 74.* But the Difference is visible. These

Fathers, whilst they confess that they honour Martyrs,

deny that they pay any religious *Worship* to them;

which is a plain and sensible Distinction. But the Pa-

pists confess that they pay a religious *Worship* to Mar-

tyrs, and justify themselves by distinguishing upon the

(where

(where it ought to be given) to God and his Son *Christ* only. It may be difficult to point out the precise Steps by which, or the exact Time when, the Respect paid to Reliques degenerated into an idolatrous Worship; but it is extremely reasonable to think, that there was a *Gradation* in the thing, and the Author, in effect, confesses it. For having observed, that “in the Days of the Apostles there does not appear to have been the least Care, or Thought, about preserving any Reliques of the first Martyr, *Stephen*,” he says, that “within a few Years after the Death of *St. John*, the last of the Apostles, the Devotion of the Church BEGAN to take a superstitious Turn in this very Article—which Superstition continued GRADUALLY to increase in proportion,” &c. And

several Degrees, or Kinds of Worship; a Distinction which *Bellarmino* himself confesses to have been owing to the Invention of the Schools, long after *Jerom's* and *Augustine's* time. *Schola Theologorum excogitavit illam distinctionem de latria & dulia.* Tom. ii. Controv. iv. Lib. i. cap. 12.

<sup>n</sup> *Rem. on the Jesuit Cabal*, p. 118, 120.



though he now maintains, that "Reliques  
 "began to be worshipped *from the very*  
 "Moment in which they first began to work  
 "Miracles;" yet he corrects himself in the  
 same Sentence, by saying a much truer  
 thing, viz. that it was not till AFTER  
 that the Respect paid to Reliques "was  
 "carried to THAT EXTRAVAGANCE  
 "with which we see it practised at this  
 "Day in the Church of Rome"; that  
 is, that Reliques were treated as Idols;  
 for I know of no greater Extravagance  
 than this.

It appears then, that the idolizing Re-  
 liques, or other material Instruments, by  
 which God was pleased to work Mi-  
 racles, was not a Practice which arose  
 from the free, unprejudiced Sense of Man-  
 kind; but that it grew up as Corruptions,  
 and false Notions of Worship sprang up and  
 prevailed; whereof the *Brazen Serpent* is  
 a flagrant Instance, which (as I have said)  
 was not worshipped in the Days of *Moses*,  
 but in After-ages, when the People were  
 become degenerate and addicted to various

\* *Rem. on Obs.* p. 22, 23.

kinds

kinds of Idolatry. Since then the mere Relation of an Instrument will not serve the Purpose, we must, in order to justify the Worship paid to such Instruments, seek for some Circumstance attending the Miracle, which shall stand as *equivalent* to a *Commission* in Cases where living Men are the Instruments, and which will pin down the Miracle to this particular Use and Intention, if such Circumstance is to be found. The only Circumstance I can think of at present, that seems to promise any thing, is, that these Miracles were wrought *for the Benefit* of those who *actually paid* idolatrous Worship to the Instruments; and if it could be said, that they were wrought for the Benefit of NONE ELSE, it would be something. But if the Fact be this (and so it stands upon the Face of Ecclesiastical History) that the same Miracles which were wrought at first for the Benefit of the Church, when no idolatrous Worship was paid to these Instruments, were *continued* only after the Worship in the Church was grown to be idolatrous; I see not what Consequence can arise, either one way or the other. For the Miracles may  
as

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as well be pleaded to justify the Worship *before* it was idolatrous, as well as to justify it *after* it was idolatrous; and therefore cannot be pleaded to justify either. I shall only add, that if any Miracle could be produced so circumstanced, as by necessary Construction to authorize idolatrous Worship; I should not think it reasonable, in order to avoid the Doctrine, to deny a Fact sufficiently attested. But I would admit the Fact, and yet reject the Doctrine, by renouncing the Power by which the Miracle is wrought. I am very sure that God cannot work a Miracle to authorize Idolatry: But I am not sure, that he may not permit evil Beings to do it. He did permit evil Beings to deceive the Heathen World; and that he might not permit them to do the like in the Christian World, is more than we have sufficient Warrant to say.

It may seem perhaps, to some, reasonable to suppose, that if such Miracles as these really were wrought whilst the Christian Worship continued in its primitive Purity, God would have withdrawn them when the Church began to grow idolatrous ;

trious; especially considering that (whether reasonably or unreasonably) it is in fact true, that many Christians *did* take a *Handle* from these Cures to justify themselves in their Idolatries; and a Consideration it is that should make us scrupulous to admit Reports of such Miracles, without sufficient Proof. But I do not think it sufficient to shew such Miracles to be absolutely incredible, or impossible; because we are not so well acquainted with the Methods of God's Providence, and the Reasons upon which he acts, as to be able to say with any Certainty, how far it may be fit for him to go in ministering to us the Occasions of Sin. It is a Rule of human Conduct, founded in common Sense, and strengthened by the Authority of the Gospel, that we are not to throw *Stumbling-blocks* in one another's Way; that is, not *needlessly*; not *without Reason*: For if, upon the whole of my Conduct taken together, it appears reasonable and fit for me to do a thing, I am not bound to forbear, though I were sure that by my doing it, another Man would take occasion to do some bad thing. We must not deny that Liberty to God which

we



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we think it reasonable to make use of ourselves, but allow him to remove or to continue, to suffer or not to suffer, what is, or may prove, offensive, as seems most suitable to the general Views of his Providence. God could not but foresee that the Cures wrought by the *Brazen Serpent* would afterwards prove a Snare to the *Israelites*; yet were those Cures wrought. And why might not other Cures be wrought by other Instruments in the Christian Church, notwithstanding they were a Snare to Christians? The Reasons of this Conduct may not appear to us; but it does not follow, that there were none. One thing is certain, that there was an Apostasy to come, when the *Man of Sin* was to be revealed, the Seeds of which began early to spring up in the Christian Church, till at last they produced that whole Mass of Corruption which we see in the Church of *Rome* at this Day. If the Seeds had never been sown, the Harvest could never have followed; and how far God might think fit to lend his own Hand in ministring the Occasions that should open the Way to this grand Revolt, that, for the Trial of the Good, for the Punish-

Punishment of the Bad, and for the Accomplishment of the Purposes of his Providence, the *Mystery of Iniquity* might work, and the *Man of Sin* grow up to full Maturity, to be destroyed at last by the *Breath of his Mouth*, and consumed by the *Brightness of his Coming*; how far, I say, this might consist with the Wisdom of Providence, it is impossible for us to say. It must ever be supposed in such Cases, that God does not leave himself without Witnesses, but that whenever, in the Course of his Providence, he ministers to us the Occasions of falling, he gives us at the same time plain Notices of his Will, that we may see our Danger and avoid it. And are there, can there be, any stronger Warnings against Idolatry, and even against that very Species of Idolatry that is now practised in the Church of Rome, than are to be found in the Books of the New Testament? Or will any one pretend to say, that these Warnings were not a much stronger Evidence against paying religious Worship to Bones or Reliques, than remote Constructions and Inferences from their Instrumentality in working Miracles, could be for it?

The

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The Justice of God surely must then stand acquitted, in suffering (if he thought so fit) those who had corrupted themselves, and shut their Eyes against this clear and open Day-light, to be led aside by the Delusions of their own vain Imaginations; and, when they would not attend to the old Doctrine which had the undoubted Attestation of Miracles, to listen to new Conceits which had it not.

I would not be understood as vouching for the Truth of all of this sort of Miracles that are reported by Ecclesiastical Writers, nor indeed of any of them, which (as I have before said) is no part of my Work. What I aim at is, to establish a right Rule of Judgment in such Cases; and the Point I would bring you to at last is this, *viz.* To leave the Miracles reported to have been wrought in every Age, and by every Writer, to be tried by their proper Evidence, the Evidence of *Testimony*. If you question a Fact, shew it to be ill supported, and you do something. If you cannot do this, all that you can do else will signify nothing, unless you can shew the thing to be

be impossible; and such Facts, I take it for granted, will always be found ill supported. The Author of the *Free Enquiry* could see this clearly enough in another Case. For, on occasion of an Objection suggested against him, that if the Character which he has given of the ancient Fathers be true, the Authority of the Books of the New Testament, which were transmitted to us through their Hands, will be rendered precarious and uncertain; he is even willing to admit the Consequence, and gives this Reply, that "it will not follow from thence that the Character must be false, and that the Fathers were neither crafty nor credulous—because (says he) the Craft and Credulity which are charged upon them, must be determined by ANOTHER sort of Evidence; not by CONSEQUENCES but by FACTS; and if the Charge be confirmed by these, it must be admitted as true, how far soever the Consequences may reach." Is it not very strange, that this Writer should lay so much Stress upon Consequences, when Corruptions only are in question; and be so perfectly careless about



them when *Foundations* are at Stake! He does not care to allow that there were any Miracles wrought in the fourth Century, because, if there were, they would establish Popery. He maintains on the contrary, that the Fathers were crafty or credulous, and will stand to it, it seems, though the Consequence should be the *Ruin* of Christianity! For his *Conduct*, I leave him to account to the Public. To his Argument, I say it is *right*. Facts have their proper Evidence; and if a thing be proved true in fact, all the Consequences of the World will not shew it to be false. But why have not I as good right to this Maxim as he? If he will say, it does not follow that the Fathers were not Knaves, because, if they were so, the Authority of the Scriptures must fail; why may not I as well say, It does not follow that no Miracles were wrought in this or that Century, because, if any were wrought, the Authority of Popery will be established? The Consequence is good in neither case; for the Appeal lies to Fact and to Testimony in both, and there I shall leave it; and as the Author is, I think, well rid of the Consequence charged upon him in regard to

to Christianity; so, I trust, we shall as well rid ourselves of the Consequence charged by him against us, with respect to Popery; to overthrow which, we have no occasion to destroy the Credit of all Miracles wrought or said to have been wrought since *Christ* and his Apostles; we only desire to have (what we have) the Word of God as contained in Scripture, and the Faith of the earliest Ages of Christianity, to stand as a Testimony against her Corruptions. This is the safe Remedy which has served us, and ever will serve us; and which we shall be excused, I hope, if we prefer to quack Prescriptions, which, if they ease us a little in one Point, will distress us in many.

I have excepted one kind of historical Relations, as incapable of being supported by any Evidence; and they are such as report *Impossibilities*. It is not unlikely that the Species of Miracles we are now speaking of, may appear to many in that light. But for my own part, I am, I confess, so weak, as not to be able to see a good Reason, why it is not as credible, that God

F f

might

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might often do honour to his Martyrs under the New Testament, by imparting a miraculous Virtue to their Bones or Reliques; as that he *once* imparted the same Virtue to the Bones of a Prophet under the Old. Those who are not Friends to Revelation may, it is likely, have no more Faith in the one than they have in the other, and may laugh when they hear us talk of Miracles wrought by “the rotten Bones and  
“Dust of the Martyrs; or a Rag of their  
“old Cloths; a Drop of Water or Oil; a  
“Bit of Bread; the Chip of an old Cross,  
“or the Figure of a new one.” But I would advise no *Christian* to be too free upon this Subject, lest he should be asked,  
—“Why not by these, as well as by a  
“Rod; by a Mantle; by Handkerchiefs;  
“by Aprons; or by Clay made with Spit-  
“tle?” To those who are disposed to take Offence at these things, the Answer is short and plain—The Instruments are indeed *mean*; but the Power of God, which it is the Intention of the Miracle to shew, is not therefore the *less*, but the *more* conspicuous.

*Ram. on Qb. p. 19.*

I now



I now take my leave of this Author, and of the Argument: having (as I hope) sufficiently established the Authority of *Christ's* Mission, upon the concurrent Evidence both of Prophecy and Miracles. But here a Scruple may arise. — If it be so clear a Point that *Jesus* was a Prophet sent from God; how came it to pass that he was rejected by the *Jews*, and the greater Part of the Heathen Nations, to whom the Apostles preached? And how comes it to pass, that so many reject it now, even among those who have been bred up in the Christian Faith? This Scruple, I apprehend, may have great Weight to prejudice many against the Gospel, who are not either able or willing to go to the Bottom of the Evidence themselves; and therefore it is fit I should say something to it.

As a Balance on the other side, it might be asked — If the Gospel is a Fiction or an Invention of Men, unsupported by sufficient Evidence of its coming from God; how came it to pass that so many received



it, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as *did* receive it? The Gospel arose from small Beginnings, as almost all great Changes do; but it prevailed at last, not by the Aids of human Power or Policy, but by the meanest Instruments, against the united Efforts of both. What Account is to be given of this? Is there such an Instance besides in all History? These are fair Questions; and if there is any Difficulty in answering them (as, I think, there is much) it will be Proof sufficient to shew, that there are some things hard to be accounted for, which are not therefore to be rejected as false. — But as to the present Doubt, I think that our Saviour has given us the true Solution of it in those Words, John iii. 19. *This is the* *Condemnation, that Light is come into the* *World, and Men loved Darkness rather* *than Light, because their Deeds were evil.* In which Words he plainly intimates, that the Cause why many rejected him, was not that he had not given sufficient Proof of his divine Mission (for had this been the Case, the Light had still been but *Darkness*, nor would those who rejected him have deserved *Condemnation*). but it was that

that the Evidence was defeated by the Corruption of their Hearts. The Gospel was a Call to Repentance; the Means of Reformation: But many were inseparably attached to their Vices, and hated to be reformed; and such as these received it not. Every one (says our Saviour) that doth Evil hateth the Light; neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd, 1 ver. 20. St. Paul has a Passage exactly to the same Purpose, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine upon them.

The Supposition that lies at the Bottom of this Reasoning is, that admitting the Gospel Evidence to be full and sufficient; it is nevertheless very possible, that the Effect may be lost through the Influence of an evil and corrupted Mind. And there is nothing more certain. For we see in other Cases, that the Judgments of Men are very much determined by their Passions, and their Prejudices, and their particular

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Ways, and Habits of thinking. There are some Truths to which a Man cannot help assenting. Of this kind are all Truths evident of themselves to Reason or to our Senses; as, that the Whole is greater than a Part; that the Air is hot or cold when we feel its Influence. But when Truth lies not in first Principles, but must be traced out in Consequences and Deductions; where the Understanding must separate, and compound, and compare, and give to every Circumstance its proper Weight; here it is plain that there will be need of Attention, and Discernment, to enable us to judge well; and if wrong Affections, or favourite Notions, interpose to call us off, we shall fall into Mistakes. It is the same thing in the Event, whether a Man has no Understanding, or whether he neglects to make use of it; and partial Consideration implies a Neglect of the Understanding, in a certain Degree, or in a certain Respect. It is this which gives to Passion and Prejudice their great Force, to hinder the Reception of Truth; whilst they make us inattentive to what we dislike, and eager to lay hold of every thing that looks fair and plausible



plausible on the other Side. It may help to explain this Matter, to look a little into the Conduct of the *Jews*, upon our Saviour's coming to them. The Character he took upon himself was that of their *Messiah*, i. e. of that great Prophet, who, in consequence of ancient Predictions recorded in their Scriptures, was to come; and the History of that Age shews, that in the general Opinion of that Nation, the Time of his Appearance was near accomplished, when *Christ* came in the Flesh. This was a Circumstance favouring his Reception. But against it lay this great Prejudice; that, as they had been taught to understand the ancient Prophecies, the Character of the Prophet that was to come, did not agree with the Character of *Christ*. They expected a Prophet that should immediately restore the Kingdom (i. e. the temporal Government) to *Israel*; that should gather them from among all the Nations where they were dispersed; that should break the *Roman* Power by which they were held in Subjection; and make them Lords of the whole Earth. But *Christ* plainly told them, that his Kingdom was not of this World. He had neither



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Honour, nor Wealth, nor Power, to offer to his Followers, but Ignominy, and Poverty, and Persecution, for the Gospel sake. Here then was a general Prejudice, which threw in whatever could court the Pride and Ambition of Men, as a Weight against the Gospel Evidence. And how did this Prejudice work? Why, though *Christ* did those things among them that no Man ever yet did (even *Moses*, in whom they trusted, not excepted), yet they would not believe. It did not blind their Eyes not to see the Miracles; but it blinded their Understandings so, that in them they did not discern the Power and Finger of God. When *Christ* cast out Devils, they confess the Fact; but their Answer is, *This Fellow doth not cast out Devils, but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils.* This was the only Handle that their Prejudices could lay hold of. The Works they saw, and could not deny them. But whether these Works were the Effect of a divine, or of a diabolical Power, this was a Point that Reason and Judgment was to decide; and here their Passions and Prepossessions proved too hard for their Understandings. So again, when *Jesus* had

opened

opened the Eyes of the Man that was born blind, and cured the Woman that had been bound together by a Spirit of Infirmity for eighteen Years: What do they object? Why, this Man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath Day. John ix. 16. These Cures, the History tells us, were wrought on the Sabbath. What then? Why, therefore the Works were not the Works of God. So they reasoned. But our Saviour shewed them unanswerably, from their own allowed Practice in other Cases, that such Works as these would well consist with the Religion of the Sabbath. Dost not each of you, on the Sabbath, loose his Ox or his Ass from the Stall, and lead him away to watering? Or, if an Ass or an Ox fall into a Pit, will he not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath Day? And they could not answer him again to these things. Luke xiii. v. 5. Chap. xiv. v. 5. 6. W. But though he stopped their Mouths, he could not mend their Hearts. They had no Mind to be convinced, and therefore the slightest Pretences satisfied them, as you will see from another Instance. For when, to the Amazement of all the People, he had

by

by a Word speaking cured a Man with a *withered Hand*; when he had loosened the Tongue of the Dumb, and opened the Eyes of the Blind, *certain of the Scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a Sign from thee.* Matt. xii. 10. 22. 38. What Sign did they want? They had seen a withered Hand made whole; a blind and dumb Man see and speak; and yet they still call out for a Sign, that is, *a Sign from Heaven*, as it is expressed, *Matt. xvi. ver. 1. and Luke xi. 16.* Miracles, undoubted Miracles, would not do, unless they were Miracles of their own choosing.

These shuffling Excuses of the *Jews* naturally bring to mind the like Pretences made use of by modern Unbelievers, whose Manner is to avoid what directly affects the Evidence, and to confront the Gospel by more distant and remote Conclusions. When you appeal to the Scriptures in proof of *Christ's* Miracles; they will tell you, in the gross that they are Fables. Ask them the Reason; they trouble not themselves with this; but they have abundance of Reasons



Reasons (such as they are) to shew that the Gospel could not be from God. As for Instance—that it was not published *so soon*, or to *so many* as they think it should—that it was not propagated in a *Way* that they approve—that it contains certain Matters that they do not understand; and the like. There is just as much Sense and Pertinency in such Arguments as these, as there was in the *Jewish* Objection about breaking the Sabbath. But we see, in both Examples, that when Men are fully bent not to believe a thing, and only want some colourable Pretences to excuse themselves, a very small Matter will serve. The most idle Exceptions shall outweigh the clearest and most substantial Proofs.

As the *Jews* had their Prejudices against the Gospel, so had the *Gentiles* theirs; but they were of another sort. The Difference is thus stated by St. Paul, 1 Cor. i. 22. *The Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after Wisdom.* To the one the Cross of Christ was a *Stumbling-block*, to the other the preaching of the Gospel was *Foolishness*. As the *Jews* expected a mighty Monarch



Monarch in their Messiah, they looked that he should come attended with all the Pomp and Terror of Power; with Thunderings and Lightenings; with Voices and Appearances from Heaven, as their Law was delivered upon Mount Sinai. To them therefore the low and humble Condition of Christ was a Rock of Offence. The Gentiles had been bred up in the Schools of their Philosophers; and with them the Apostles fell under Contempt, because they did not reason and dispute as their Philosophers were wont to do. But there was, yet a greater Cause of Disgust than this, and that was the direct Opposition there was, between the Doctrines of the Gospel and the Maxims and Practices of the Heathen World, which was every where over-run with Idolatry and Licentiousness. Read once more what St. Paul says of them, *Rom. i. 23.* and following Verses. *They changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Man; and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to Uncleaness through the Lusts of their own Hearts, to dishonour*

dishonour their Bodies between themselves—  
 And even as they did not like to retain God in  
 their Knowledge, God gave them over to a  
 reprobate Mind, to do those things which  
 were not convenient, being filled with all Un-  
 righteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Co-  
 vetousness, Maliciousness—and so on. Do  
 you wonder that the Gospel, which con-  
 demns all these Abominations, and teaches  
 us to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts,  
 and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in  
 this present World, should be rejected by  
 many who were vouchsafed the Offer of it  
 by the Ministry of the Apostles? Great was  
 its Light: great was its Evidence, as it  
 appeared in the mighty Works wrought  
 by their Hands. But what signifies Light  
 to those who have not Eyes to see; or Evi-  
 dence to those who have not Hearts to un-  
 derstand? As there is nothing that draws  
 Men stronger than sensual Appetite, it  
 must of course be the strongest Bias against  
 any Religion that stands in its Way, and  
 offers to call them back to Rule and Order.  
 Besides that, brutish Habits in a great  
 measure unqualify us for Thought and  
 Reflection; whilst at the same time they  
 keep

keep us more awake, and attentive to every thing that gratifies Flesh and Blood; and even those who *think*, will find out Ways to baffle their Understandings, and make them slide and fall in with the Stream of their Passions. The Jews pretended, that Jesus wrought Miracles by the Power of the Devil: The Heathens, no doubt, had their Subterfuges too, to shelter them from the Force of what they saw done by the Hands of the Apostles; which the false Philosophy that then prevailed could very easily furnish. And therefore St. Paul warns the Christians of those times, to *beware lest any Man spoiled them, through Philosophy and vain Deceit; after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of the World.* Col. ii. 8. The Maxims of worldly and true Wisdom often run across; and when they do, the worldly Wisdom is too apt to prevail, as there is always that in it which flatters our Pride, if not our sensual Inclinations.

This is the Foundation of what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 26. *Not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,*



are called. This is the Reason why *Christ* applied not himself to such, but to the *Poor*, and to the *Mek*, and to the *Lowly*; who being less under the Influence of worldly Interests, were the better prepared to receive his Doctrine. Those who draw this Conduct of our blessed Saviour into an Objection against the Gospel, and insinuate, as if it implied a Consciousness within himself, that the Proofs he had to offer in support of his Pretensions, were such as would not stand a fair Trial, greatly mistake the Matter. If we knew nothing of those Proofs, there would be some Colour for the Objection. But the Evidence which *Christ* gave, was well known both to great and small; and we are not now ashamed to say what it was. He had the Power of God visibly attending his Ministry in Signs and Wonders. This was a reasonable Evidence. But a reasonable Evidence must have reasonable Men to consider it, or it will work nothing. *Christ* therefore did no more in this, than what every wise Man would do in the fairest, honestest, Cause in the World; he sought impartial, disinterested Judges; which the wise (as they were



were then esteemed) and the *mighty*, and the *noble*, generally were *not*; as indeed, in such Cases, they very seldom are.

But to return to my Subject. It appears from the whole, that accepting the Gospel or rejecting it, is a Matter in which *human Liberty* is properly concerned; without which Supposition, as Faith could challenge no Reward, so neither would Unbelief render us justly liable to Condemnation. A Man cannot sin in judging or believing as the Evidence appears to him. This is not an Act of Choice. But he may sin by a careless or wicked Mind, which keeps the Evidence out of Sight, or represents it in a false Light; because no Man is careless or wicked, but by the Act of his own Will. It is not at all surprizing, that if this was the Case of many in the Days of *Christ* and his Apostles, it should be the Case of more in these late Ages. For human Nature is always the same; human Passions ever work to the same Ends; and Prejudice will ever be more secure and undisturbed, in proportion as the Accidents of Time furnish out a greater Variety of Coverings, under

der which to hide and conceal it. Those who lived in the time of *Christ* and saw his Miracles, had but one Point to consider ; Were such Miracles an Evidence of his divine Mission ? But now another Question may arise ; Were such Miracles ever wrought ? We see not the Miracles wrought, as they did. We believe them upon the Authority of the Scripture History, against which Pretences of various kinds are not wanting, which may serve the Purpose of those who love to find fault, and are not disposed to consider things in an impartial and equitable Light. In this State of the Case, when the Evidence of Faith has passed through many Hands, and has been conveyed down to us through a long Succession of Ages ; Learning and Good-sense will be necessary to the forming a right Judgment in those who are desirous to see to the Bottom of it. But Learning is, like other Instruments, useful or hurtful according to the Hands into which it falls. The same natural Parts ; the same same acquired Knowledge, which qualify one Man to defend the Truth, will qualify another to traduce and expose it ; and whether they shall be employed this way or

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that way; will always depend upon the Temper and Disposition with which Men enter upon such Enquiries. Thus it must for ever be, except in those Cases, where the Weaknesses and the Passions of Men are nothing interested; or where things are made so plain as to leave no room for Dispute or Contradiction. The Evidence for Christianity is not of this sort, we confess, which, surely! can be no Reproach to our Faith, considering how few things there are that are capable of Demonstration. In the Affairs of common Life we stand not upon such high Terms. We seldom in such Cases consider what is strictly possible or impossible, but what is most certain, or what is most probable, according to the common Rules of judging, which our Experience and Observation have taught us. Let us but preserve this Spirit in our religious Enquiries, and we shall find enough to satisfy us. Reasonable Men will think this to be reasonable Advice; but it is not to be expected that those should listen to it, who from a secret Disgust, and Disaffection to Religion, are desirous to make the most of every Objection that can be raised against it.

For



For the Reasons I have offered it is natural to expect, that when Vice and Immorality greatly prevail in any Age, Infidelity will keep an even Pace with it. 'Tis then we are to look to hear the Scriptures vilified, and the lowest Artifices made use of to bring them into Disrepute; which may afford a proper Caution, first, to serious Christians, who mean well, but do not see a great way into the Reasons of their Faith, and may be scandalized when they observe Men of Parts and Learning treating the Gospel with Indifferency or Contempt. Let such as these consider the Spirit of the Times in which they live; let them observe *the Men and their Communications*, and if they find their Practices to be bad, they will see little Cause to rely upon their Judgments in such Matters as these. I do not take upon me to affirm, that every Unbeliever is an immoral Man; nor does our Saviour say it. He states the Fact as it *generally was*, and as Experience shews it *generally to be*. No Man should be condemned rashly; but when we see the Causes before our Eyes, we have a Right to judge of their Effects, and to suppose, that when a Man acts against Reason, he may judge and deter-



mine against it too. All Vices are not notorious ; and where there are no open, immoral Practices, there may be secret Corruptions and Foibles, not less apt to mislead Men in their Judgments. If a Man is not debauched in his Morals ; he may be vain ; he may be proud ; which commonly breeds an Affectation of Novelty, and a Disdain to think in the common Road. This Disease of the Mind is incident to the best Understandings, and is so much the more dangerous in its Consequences, as it oft-times lurks under a Conduct seemingly cool and disinterested. By Pride the Angels fell ; by Pride the first of Men ; and what Wonder is it that it should be a Snare to his Posterity ? who, when they aspire to be *knowing as God*, will find him in none of his Works, whether of Redemption, or of Creation ! Lastly ; without the Supposition of any thing that is *culpable*, there may be something in the *natural Frame*, and *Cast* of the Mind, that may lead some into peculiar Ways of thinking upon certain Points, who may judge extremely well in other Matters ; as is seen to a very great Degree in Cases of *Madness*. But neither this, nor any of the foregoing

Observa-

Observations, are offered as if they would at all help to decide the Merits of the Cause between Christians and Unbelievers; but only to shew, that if we ourselves are satisfied in the Reasons of our Faith, we should not be discouraged, though we should observe some even of the greatest Characters for their Parts and Learning, entertaining different Sentiments; because there will always be room to suspect, that the Judgments of such may not be determined by the mere Force of Truth, without any Intermixture of human Weakness or Passion to give the Mind a wrong Turn.

The other sort of Men to whom I would apply myself (if I can be heard by such) are Unbelievers themselves, who should not consider it as an indifferent Matter, whether they accept the Gospel when offered, or whether they wilfully shut their Eyes against the Truth. The Gospel was intended for a Benefit to Mankind; but then it was intended likewise for the Glory of God; and therefore it is not offered to us in such a way, as to leave it to our Discretion whether we will use the Benefit; or whether we will neglect

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it; but under an Obligation to embrace the Means vouchsafed for our Salvation, upon pain of Condemnation for our Disobedience. This Consideration makes the accepting or not accepting the Gospel, when it is offered, to be a very serious thing; and entitles it to a fair hearing: And this I will venture to say to those, who are cool and disinterested in their Enquiries, and have a true Concern for the Interests of Natural Religion; that if they will consider the Gospel Revelation as an Instrument of Providence to reform the Corruptions of Men, and to assist and promote the Practice of real Virtue in the World; they will find in it such Marks of Wisdom and Goodness, as will be sufficient to turn their Prejudices the other way, or at least to cure that *Unwillingness* to believe, which has ever been the strongest Obstacle against its Reception. A short Review of the chief Points of the Gospel Doctrine, and the external Appointments in which the Practice of Christians is concerned; will place this Matter in a very clear and satisfactory Light.

In what State Mankind was when *Christ* came, we have before set forth, Under  
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Sin and Condemnation; Idolatry and Wickedness every where prevailing. See now what Steps were taken to restore Mankind, and to recover lost Virtue. The first was to declare the Forgiveness of all past Offences, on the Condition of Repentance. This was a very necessary Point to begin with: To make Men *secure* that their Repentance should be accepted. For if Mankind was to be reformed, there must have been some proper *Encouragement* to them to reform; which there could not have been, had there been no Hopes left from Repentance. If a Man is so much overwhelmed in Debt, as to see no Possibility of escaping a Gaol; what Spur will there be left for Industry?—But what occasion was there for the Gospel (may some one ask) to give Mankind this Security? Doth not every one's Reason tell him, that God will accept of repenting Sinners? It is very natural for those who have been bred up under the Gospel Light, by which revealed Truths are so familiarized to the Understanding, that they pass with them for pure, natural Principles, to ask this and many such like Questions. Reason no doubt will shew us,



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that *without* Repentance no Man can be acceptable to God; and there can be as little doubt, that those who see into the Error of their Ways, and change their Course of Life, shall find Mercy before our great and merciful Judge. But how far this Mercy will extend, is another Question. What the Gospel offers is a full and plenary Remission of all Sins, or a Restitution to our first original Privileges; of which there is no Man of common Sense who would not wish for some better Security, than mere natural Principles can give him. If a Man had offended an earthly Sovereign, and forfeited his Life or his Estate, by the Laws of his Country; which would he chuse? To be left to *reason* upon the Clemency of his Prince; or to have his Pardon *sealed* by the Royal Authority? The Cases are alike. For whatever *Hopes* unassisted Reason may administer, that God will accept of Repentance, as a full Equivalent to that Obedience which we ought to have paid; still they are *but* Hopes. But the Gospel is the *Seal* of our Forgiveness, authorized by God himself; which leaving no room for Doubt or Distrust, takes off every

every Weight that should check our growing Resolutions.

There can be no doubt but that Men's Endeavours to do well, will, where there is nothing else to hinder, always bear Proportion both to the Certainty and the Extent of the beneficial Consequences, that offer themselves as an Encouragement to Virtue. Consider then what the Benefit of our Acceptance is; or what the Gospel offers as the Fruit of our Repentance. It is not a simple Acquittance from the *Imputation* of *Guilt*, and from whatever *Punishment* God might think fit to inflict upon us as Sinners; but it is the Promise of *eternal Life*; of being raised again to an incorruptible State; to live for ever with him in Joy and Bliss unspeakable. Can natural Light shew us any such Fruit of Repentance as this? I deny not that Reason gives strong Notices of a future State, where a just and proper Distinction shall be made between good and bad Men; and that many of the ancient Philosophers believed this Doctrine. But the weak Principles by which they supported it; and the

doubtful,

doubtful, uncertain Manner in which some of the wisest of them expressed themselves, very plainly shew, that as this Notion was not taken up at first merely upon natural Principles, so some farther Help was wanting to make it a sure, and stable Principle of Conduct. I can easily see a great Finess in supposing, that God will reward the Good and punish the Bad in another World; because I do not observe, that he does it with any Degree of Exactness in this. But I see no Necessity of supposing, that in order to justify himself to his Creatures, God must repay the little Good we do with an eternal Reward.

But to judge rightly of the Usefulness of the Gospel, we should consider, not what was necessary to a few only; but how it is calculated to serve the Bulk of Mankind. Be it admitted, that some few of the wisest and most considerate might, and did, by the Use of their Reason, discover such Evidences of a future State, as proved effectual to support a common Virtue; how should the common People come by these Notions? It is plain that they could not have  
*reasoned*

reasoned themselves into this Belief (a Work for which they are by no means qualified) they must have had it by *Authority*, as in fact they had. Their Philosophers taught it; their Legislators encouraged it; and so they took it up by Education and Custom, as the Bulk of Mankind does almost every thing else. Now when Notions are left to rest upon Authority, their Influence will be greater or less in proportion to the Weight of that Authority upon which they are received. And this will open to us a very considerable Difference between the State of Religion, as it subsisted under the mere Guidance of natural Light, and as it stood when the Gospel appeared. The Heathens believed a future State upon the Authority of their wise Men; the Gospel offers it to our Belief upon the Authority of God. There is in all Cases a great Difference between divine Authority and an Authority merely human; but the Authority of the heathen Philosophers was much weakened by the Disagreement in their Sentiments among themselves. Some believed a future State; others denied it; and those who doubted, and would satisfy themselves, had  
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no other way of doing it, than by deciding upon the Merits of their Reasonings; which very few were qualified by their Capacities to do. But *Christ* and his Apostles came with the visible Marks of the Power of God attending their Ministry, and declared in his Name, that he had appointed a Day in which he would judge the World; which Evidence, at the same time that it wrought Conviction, awakened Mankind also into Attention and Reverence, when they saw, in these mighty Works, the God of Heaven and Earth, as it were, present among them.

Take these things together, and you will perceive, that nothing could be better suited to reform a corrupted and degenerate World, than the preaching of the Gospel, before which Idolatry and Superstition vanished, like Darkness at the Rising of the Sun, long before heathen Princes were converted, and aided its farther Growth and Increase by the Sanctions of Civil Authority. Now let us see, what Methods the divine Providence hath provided, that the Gospel thus established should be propagated

gated to future Ages, to stand as a Barrier against Vice and Corruption, and to convey the Benefit of its saving Influence to Generations yet unborn.

In the first place, God hath given us his WRITTEN WORD; which is a standing Call to Repentance, upon the Motives of a Life to come. As Men were Sinners against the first Law; so, it was foreseen that they would be Sinners against the second; nor was it suitable to the Frailties and Imperfections of human Nature to expect otherwise. And therefore the Offers of Acceptance upon Repentance, are made to extend to all Transgressions, future as well as past. Great Condescension! And yet not more than the Wisdom of God saw fit and proper for us. Of this amazing Instance of God's Love to Mankind, and his *Unwillingness that any should perish*, the Scriptures are our Charter; in which *Christ and his Apostles being dead*, do yet *speak to us*; and shew the Power of God in *Signs and Wonders*, wrought for the *Confirmation of his Word*. Nor are the Scriptures useful only as they contain the

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Evidences of our Faith; but as they are a Rule of Practice plain and easy to be understood by all. Our natural Notions of Right and Wrong are, to a serious, attentive Mind, as plain a Direction in ordinary Cases, as any written Law can be. But Vice and Corruption may pervert Reason and defile natural Light, as it heretofore did in the heathen World; insomuch that the Philosophers of old found it necessary to assist Reason; to deduce moral Duties from their first Principles; and shew their Alliance with the real Happiness of Mankind. This was all they could do; and no doubt it had very good Effects upon many. But the Gospel takes a much nearer Course; and sends all away with this short and plain Answer, *Thus it is written—God hath said it.* The Philosophers wrote many useful Books of Morality; but they wanted *Authority*; by which alone, the less capable (which are always the far greatest) Part of Mankind are to be kept right; which would very sensibly be felt, if we should take away the *Bible* from the common People, and give them the *Ethics* of *Aristotle*, or *Cicero*, in their stead. To  
make

make such Writings useful and instructive, you must give them Understandings as well as Books. But every one that is not a direct Idiot, may understand the ten Commandments, and such easy and familiar Lessons as he finds in the New Testament, and if he is taught to believe, that these are the Word of God, he wants nothing else (so far as Authority can go) to enforce the Practice of them.

But here perhaps a Question may be moved; How can the common People receive a rational Conviction, that the Scriptures are the Word of God? Can they enter into those Arguments which are moved among Men of Letters, concerning the Authors and Authority of these Books? No; nor is it needful that they should. Those who think that God cannot grant a Revelation worthy of himself, unless it be of that sort, that all who are to have the Benefit of it, shall see its Evidence in the full Extent and Compass of it; may ask such Questions. But this is laying a Foundation upon which no Religion, whether revealed or natural, can possibly stand. The Heathens, as I have before observed, be-  
lieved



believed a future State ; and without this Be-  
 lief there can be no sufficient Security for  
 the Practice of Virtue. But upon what  
 foot was this Doctrine received among the  
 common People? Do you think they were  
 all Philosophers, and able to deduce it  
 from natural Principles, as the Philosophers  
 did? No ; they took it (as they did a  
 great many other things) upon the Credit  
 of the *current, National Sense*. Should  
 Christianity be lost, and Heathenism again  
 revive, the Case must again be the same.  
 Some few might be able to reason them-  
 selves into Religion ; but the far greater  
 Part must take it upon Trust. There is  
 no Difference in this respect between Chri-  
 stianity and other Religions. As the Hea-  
 thens had their *first and leading Principles*,  
 which they took upon the Authority of  
*common Consent*, so have the Christians  
 theirs ; and so have the Professors of eve-  
 ry Religion in the World as well as  
 they. It is upon this Authority that the  
 Scriptures are (generally) received among  
 us, as the Word of God. Few can shew  
 the *Reasons* why they ought to be so re-  
 ceived ; but all hear and understand the  
*common*

*common Voice*, which does and must serve instead of Evidence, to those who are not qualified to look any farther. The Faith of such, no doubt, is less complete and perfect in its kind; but their Virtues are not the less secure. For Virtue follows Faith *itself*; not the *Reasons* upon which Faith is grounded.

But though God hath given us a *Law*, which all may understand, and by which all may improve; yet is not the Effect therefore without Hazard. Human Nature is ever the same; subject to Disturbance from Lust and Passion: And as, before the Gospel came, Men were Sinners against the Law, not because they saw not the Law, but because they wanted Resolution to put it in Practice; so it is now. The Motives to Virtue are, indeed, now set before us in the most strong and advantageous Light. But still they are but *distant* Motives; and distant Prospects are apt to lose their Force, if sober Attention, and frequent Reflexion, do not bring them home to the Mind. It is to this Purpose that the ORDINANCES, and the INSTI-

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TUTIONS

TUTIONS of the Gospel are intended to serve. I We are to pray to God; to hear and read His Word; to receive the Sacrament of the holy Communion, and the like: All to the same End; to keep us always awake and attentive to our great and lasting Interest; and to receive those Supplies of Aid from above, that may lead us to grow and improve in every good Work. Consider outward Religion in this Light; as a Discipline training us up to Virtue; the Barrier and Out-guard of that true, inward Piety, which alone can render us acceptable in the Sight of God; and what can you find in it that a reasonable Man will not approve? Little Cause, surely! there is to treat these things as *superstitious Inventions*. Superstitious they may be as they are *used*; and so may anything else. But take them as intended by the Wisdom that appointed them, and according to the Ends that they are naturally calculated to serve; and no doubt they are *wholesome* and necessary Provisions, to guard against that habitual and servile Attachment to the World, which would defeat all our future Hopes, and render God's

Call

Call by the Gospel ineffectual. It is an easy Matter for a man to say, "I want none of these Helps. I believe in God; I know my Duty; I can consider by myself, and practise, without going to Church to pray, or to hear Sermons." It may be so; but are you sure you *shall* do every thing of this kind that is proper to be done? Or (which is a far more material Question) are you sure that every body else will do so? Publick Provisions are made for *general* Use; and with a View, not to what Men *may* do if they are so disposed; but to what, Circumstances considered, they most probably *will* do: And this we may say with the greatest Appearance of Reason, that had God tied us down to no kind of external Worship, but left every Man to the simple Effects of his own private Reflections, the Gospel (and with it *true Religion*) would long ago have been lost to the World.

We see then upon the whole, that God, by the Gospel, has done every thing that in the Nature and Reason of things was fit to be done, towards securing the Practice



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of moral Duties. The Law is plain and legible to all; we cannot therefore plead *Ignorance*. *Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing*, are set before us; we cannot then plead *Want of Encouragement*. God's Ministers and his Ordinances are ready at hand, open to our Use; we cannot therefore say, that we have not been, or that we might not have been, *admonished*. Every thing is done that could be done, short of *Force*; and with *Force*, the Nature of Religion will not stand. And therefore when Men cry up Natural Religion, and at the same time treat the Gospel with Contempt, what is it that they can mean? The Life of a good Christian is the Perfection of natural Religion; and he that truly values Natural Religion, will value the Gospel for Natural Religion's sake. If the Gospel were not supported by proper Evidence, it would be a good Reason why it should be rejected. But why should any Man be *prejudiced* against the Gospel, who means well to Natural Religion? Why should he examine and judge with an *Unwillingness* to be convinced? *To deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly,*

berly, righteously, and godly, in this present World; is the very thing you mean (or should mean) by Natural Religion; and this is all the Burden that the Gospel lays upon you. To shew Reverence to the outward Appointments of the Gospel; what hath it in it that can give just Cause of Offence? The Gospel makes Allowance for necessary Omissions of this sort; and for the rest, if you think it worth your while to improve in Virtue, the Benefit will amply repay you. But if you are displeased at every thing that stands as a Check upon your Vices, these things will offend; and here, I fear, lies the Bottom of the Sore. Men talk of Natural Religion, because it sounds well; but they mean something else. The Gospel is a precise, definitive System of Natural Religion; and there are few Instances in which a Believer can do wrong, without being self-condemned. But if the plain, written Word is once laid aside, and every Man is left to his own Sense of things; Natural Religion will then be to every Man what He sees right; which in many Cases may be, what Passion suggests, and not what Reason dictates.

*A serious Address, to professed Christians.* I have one Word of Advice more to offer, and it is to those who profess themselves the Disciples of *Christ*; who should attend diligently to the high Privilege to which they are called, and take care not to defeat the gracious Purposes of God towards them and all Mankind, by their *wicked Lives*. St. *Paul* speaking of the *disorderly Walkers* of his Times, sets them forth as *Enemies to the Cross of Christ*, i. e. to that Method of Salvation which is established upon *Christ's Sacrifice*. And the Reasons why they are so are very obvious. *Christ* died to save us; but a mere Profession, without a Life suitable to it, will not save us, but greatly add to our Condemnation. Such Men as these therefore are first Enemies to *themselves*; and by being so they are Enemies to *God*, who taketh no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance. 2 Pet. iii. 9. Ezech. xiii. 32. Behaviour (which is not reasonable) can) or that it doth not, he does not in.

But there is another, more extensive, Sense, in which the wicked Lives of those who

who profess the Gospel, may be said to defeat the Purpose of the Gospel, which, I conceive, the Apostle chiefly intended in this Place, viz. that it brings Christianity under *Disgrace*, and exposes it to the Scorn of Unbelievers. St. Peter, speaking of the *false Teachers* that should arise in the Christian Church, says, that *many shall follow their pernicious (or filthy) Ways, by reason of whom the Way of Truth (i. e. the Gospel) shall be evil spoken of.* 2 Pet. ii. 2. St. Paul tells the Jews, that *through them, i. e. by their wicked Lives, the Name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles.* Rom. ii. 24. And he exhorts Christians to all manner of sober and exemplary Behaviour, *that the Word of God (i. e. the Gospel) might not be blasphemed.* Tit. ii. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 1. The Reason will for ever hold: An immoral Life will always be a Reproach to the Religion a Man professes. For what will be the Construction? Why, either that his Religion allows of such a Behaviour (which no reasonable Religion can) or that, if it doth not, he does not in earnest believe it himself. When the Gospel was first published to the World, there



were nominal Professors who taught Licentiousness, as well as practised it. These were a Reproach to the true Believers; to whom the same Corruptions would naturally be imputed, by those who were not enough acquainted with both to know the Difference. And even the true Believers, who lived ill, did more to disgrace themselves and the Doctrines they received, by their ill Lives, than the Doctrines could do to recommend the Gospel. For the Doctrines were known but to a few; the Men and their Manners were open to all; and they who saw the one to be bad, would be ready enough to presume that the other were so too.

This Observation suits (and should be considered by all whom it concerns) the Case of those Christian Colonies, who are settled in foreign Parts; and who if they shew a Behaviour, not better (and it may be worse) than is practised by the very Heathens, among whom they dwell; will have little Cause to expect, that any Attention should be paid to the preaching of the Gospel. But let us take the Case as it stands

stands among ourselves, where it is well known and understood, that all immoral Practices are condemned by the Gospel; and consider what Notion the ignorant and less instructed will most naturally entertain, when they shall observe those who pretend to understand and to have considered Christianity, and perhaps may magnify it much in their Discourses, running counter to its Rules and Precepts, in their Lives and Conversations. There are few (as I have before observed) who take up Religion as the Result of Judgment and Enquiry. We are bred up to it as we are to Arts and Sciences; and what we take up at first *implicitly* from our Parents, and Instructors, we retain afterwards, for the greater part; more in Reliance upon the publick Voice and Opinion, than upon any Conviction of our own, founded upon a clear and full Sight of the Evidence. This is no Reflection upon Religion, nor indeed upon Mankind; because in the Nature, and Constitution of things, otherwise it cannot be. All Men are not qualified for Enquiries of this kind; and, comparatively speaking, perhaps few are. Men of Education and Leisure may  
 about do

do much for themselves; but those who are born to the laborious, or busy Employments of Life, *must* take their Religion from the common Instruction, or they will have none. And yet, after all, the Gospel must stand or fall by its Evidence. Those who receive it, not seeing its Evidence, do it upon a Presumption, that there is Evidence seen and known to those who are qualified to judge of it. But how will it weaken this Presumption, when a Man (I say) shall observe those upon whose Judgment he relies, talking indeed the common Language of Believers, but living as if they had no Religion at all? "Are you  
"in earnest (may some one ask) when  
"you tell me, upon the Authority of the  
"Gospel, that eternal Wrath is prepared  
"for Sinners; and will you yet make  
"yourself a Transgressor of the Law?  
"Why do you read me this Lesson but to  
"reform my Life? Do you believe it, and  
"will you not reform your own? Is it not  
"of more Concern to you to save yourself,  
"than it is to save me?" Upon this sort of Reasoning Mankind is apt to *presume*, that bad Livers are not heartily convinced of the  
Truth

Truth of Religion, though out of Custom and Compliance with the World they may make an outward shew of it. I do not say that the Presumption is right; and, I trust, it very often fails. For we see in other Instances, that Mens Persuasions and their Practices are not always of a Piece. If there is any thing plain to common Sense and Experience, it is this; that bad Courses are the high Road to Beggary and Misery. Yet we have Rakes and Spendthrifts. We cannot, therefore, *certainly* conclude, that a Man has no Faith because he has little Virtue. But it is a *Handle* that those will always be ready to lay hold of, who want to *excuse* themselves from believing; and they are all who *love Darkness rather than Light*; the loose, the idle, and the vain; who strengthen themselves in Numbers, and having no Judgment of their own, or not caring to make use of any, will naturally lay the greatest Weight on the Side that most favours their sensual Inclinations.

But if such Examples do not make Men directly Unbelievers, they certainly will produce in many great *Carelessness* of Behaviour;



haviour; which is another way of defeating the Purpose of the Gospel. There can be no Question, but that as the Rule of every Man's Conduct is the Law of God; so the proper Motive of his Actions is, a Sense of Duty to God, under the Views of those Rewards and Punishments, which he hath reserved for good and bad Men at the great Day of Recompence. And wherever these Principles lay fast hold, and become the prevailing Subject of our Thoughts, bad Examples can do no Harm. But because these things lie at a Distance, and are therefore too apt to be overlooked, the good Providence of God hath, as a *present* Aid to our Infirmities, thrown many Rubs and Checks in the forbidden Paths of Life, conspiring with our future Hopes and Expectations, and mutually assisting to keep us within our proper Bounds. Of this sort, among many others, is the Sense of *Shame*, which every Man feels when he does things notoriously bad; and than which there is not a stronger Barrier against Vice, till, by frequency in sinning, the Mind is hardened and grows to be insensible. It is to be feared, that many observe a decent

a decent Behaviour, more from the present Disgrace, to which their Vices will expose them; than through the Apprehensions of what is to come hereafter. Even this imperfect Virtue is better than none. It is a good Step to Religion, if it be not Religion itself. If a Man keeps himself free from bad Habits, virtuous Inclinations will naturally follow; as the good Seed that is sown, will grow up and flourish, when the Ground is kept clear from Weeds and Rubbish. But a bad Example (so far as it goes) takes off the Restraint of *Shame*, for what is *Shame*, but that *Disgust* which a Man feels within himself, from the Presumption that he stands condemned by those who are Witnesses of his ill Behaviour? And can you be presumed to condemn another for what you allow in your ownself? If in common Estimation all Actions were alike, nobody would be ashamed of any thing that he does; and this would *appear* to be the Case, should Mankind generally act as if there *was* no Distinction. Every bad Man does what in him lies to bring on this wretched State of things. The Vices of Nations are the Vices of Individuals,

duals; which spread like a Contagion from House to House, till they fill every Corner of the Land. And when bad Men are thus left free from all Restraint, and Vice has obtained as it were the publick Sanction; the few good ones that are left are borne down, as by a mighty Torrent; and what are we to think of the Gospel when this is the Case? Or what of those, who by first breaking down the Banks, and running out of their proper Inclosure, draw Multitudes after them, like Herds of Cattle, to their own Destruction? Our Saviour has decided their Case in very solemn Terms, *Matt. xviii. 7. Wo unto the World because of Offences; for it must needs be that Offences come; but wo unto that Man by whom the Offence cometh—it were better for him that a Millstone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea.—Take heed that ye despise not one of these little Ones—for the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.* Our Saviour calls his Disciples, *little Ones*; such they were in all worldly Estimation. Low in their Circumstances and Stations; little in their Knowledge

and

and Experience of human Things. And such are the Bulk of Believers in all Ages. The more apt therefore are they to be scandalized, and run into bad Courses, when they see their Betters lead the Way before them. But they are not to be *despised*; for the Son of God came to save *them* as well as *the rest*. And therefore to the young and to the ignorant; to the weak and unexperienced; we should be the Patterns of good things, even for their Weakness and their Infirmities sake; otherwise, *their Sins* will be *our Sins*, and so reckoned at the Day of Judgment. *In many things we offend all*; and would we search and examine ourselves, and see how the Reckoning stands, only as it lies between God and our own Consciences; we shall find it heavy enough, and see Cause to cry out, with *David*, *O cleanse thou me from my secret Faults*! But *scandalous Offences* should make us tremble. For who knows whom they may corrupt, whom they may pervert? And how sad an Account shall we have to give, when, together with our own Sins, the Sins of Numbers shall be laid to our Charge! There is no reckoning how  
far



far the Influence of a bad Example reaches, nor what are the worst of its Effects; for the Seeds of Corruption once sown, work unseen and unobserved; and the most melancholy Consideration of all is, that when the Mischief is done, it may never be capable of Reparation. There is no way of making Reparation for Sin but by true Repentance; and when a bad Man, who has been an Example of Vice, becomes an Example of Repentance too, he has done his utmost. But we should consider, that, generally speaking, Men are more prone to follow bad Examples than good ones; and that many may be hurt by our Vices, who will know nothing of our Reformation, or if they do, will nothing profit by it. And what a mortifying Reflection must it be to a Man, when he comes to recover from his Vices, and to entertain a serious Sense of Religion, to consider, that by one bad Part of his Life he has done that Mischief, for which all that remains of it, be it ever so long, may never make a sufficient Amends!

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The Result is this, that every one that nameth the Name of Christ, should depart from Iniquity, and study to adorn his Doctrine in all things, by a Behaviour suitable to his Profession. The greater Influence his Station and Character gives him, the stronger will the Argument hold him; for the Effects will always bear a Proportion to it. No Man is so mean as not to be considerable to certain Persons, and on certain Accounts; and therefore the Argument reaches to all. But a bad Life is worst in those who stand distinguished from the common Rank of Men by a Superiority in Birth and Fortunes, or in Wisdom, or in Authority, and Pre-eminence; because these are they from whom the Bulk of Mankind take their Maxims. For this Reason our Saviour gives it in particular Charge to his first Disciples, who were to be the Instruments by which the Gospel was to be spread over the Face of the Earth, to let their Light so shine before Men, that they might see their good Works, and glorify their Father which is in Heaven. Ye (says he) are the Salt of the Earth; but if the Salt

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has left its Savour, whereby shall be  
 salted? It is therefore good for nothing  
 but to be cast out, and to be trodden under  
 foot of Men. Matthew vi 3. And meet it is  
 that we confess, with Fear and Trembling,  
 how justly founded are the publick Ex-  
 pectations; that we, who by our Office are  
 the Preachers of Righteousness, should be  
 the Examples of it too. And meet it is that  
 every Man for himself, besides the common  
 Obligation he is under from his Christian  
 Profession, to a sober and godly Conversa-  
 tion, should likewise seriously lay to heart,  
 what kind of Behaviour the particular Cha-  
 racter and Situation he bears in Life more  
 especially enforces; that our Virtues may  
 shine in their full Proportion and Beauty.  
 This would bring Religion into Credit and  
 Esteem; and stir up a noble Emulation,  
 which shall most excell in every thing that  
 is virtuous and praise-worthy. But if those  
 who are to be Patterns to others, shall do ill  
 themselves; it is not to be expected, that  
 the rest of the World should do better. And  
 I will add one thing more, which is,  
 that an immoral Life in those who believe  
 the



the Gospel, not only brings it into Disgrace with others, but, in the long run, makes it contemptible even to themselves. The State of a Christian, when his Conduct is such as will give him a just Foundation for Hope and Trust in God, is a most desirable blessing. But when he sees nothing but the Sentence of God against himself, it is of all States the most miserable. How shall a Man change the Prospect? By Repentance? Yes. But Repentance is the Restoration of the moral State. He that repents, from an immoral becomes a moral Man, and then the Promises of the Gospel are open to him. But suppose he does not find a Heart to repent. What must he do then? Why, he must either lay aside his Faith, or he must contrive such Softenings and Palliations of the Law, as will render his Faith dead and fruitless. The Force of Education is strong, but it is not irresistible. We find it hard to lay aside those Opinions which we have been bred up in; but it is to be done, if we will take pains for it: And this, I am afraid, is too common a Case, that in proportion as Men grow bad in Practice, they grow bad in Principle.



too. Few set out with irreligious Principles at first. They sin to gratify their Passions, without giving themselves the Trouble to think of Consequences. But when their Vices begin to make them uneasy, they are drawn off by Degrees. Their Inclinations naturally beget *Hopes* favourable to themselves; and these *Hopes* grow into *vehement Presumptions*, or *settled Opinions*, as Reason, disturbed by Passion, grows unfaithful to itself, and by *Disuse* and *Misapplication* contracts every Day more and more an Unaptness to compare and lay things together. It may be as difficult to explain the Manner, *how* the Understandings of Men are warped to see things in a false and deceitful Light, as it is to explain how a strait Limb grows distorted, or how the whole Body degenerates from a robust to a sickly Constitution. But of the Reality of the thing we can as little doubt. There are distempered Minds as well as distempered Bodies; and a corrupted Heart as naturally makes an unsound Head, as a foul Stomach produces Indigestions.

This

This should teach all who have such a Value for their Religion as to be desirous to keep it, to take Care of the first Beginnings of Vice. When *Elisha* had told *Hazael*, that he should kill his Master, he answered like a Man astonished, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this thing?* 2 Kings viii. 13. But he did it; and Thousands come to that in the Progress of Vice, which at first setting out, they would have thought of with Abhorrence. It is shocking to a Mind that has been formed by Education to virtuous Principles, at first hearing, to be told, that there is no God, or no Providence, or no future Reckoning; but if he gives himself a Loose to Vice, he will soon be reconciled to such Maxims; and what then shall save him? We know there is no Salvation for Sinners but by Repentance, the Motives to which every true Believer has within himself. But if a Man thinks that he is to *die like the Beast that perisheth*, he will very consistently think, he has a Right to live like them too; and every Argument you can offer to bring him to better Courses will be vain and fruitless.

To

without feeling such Impressions as will  
 To conclude *nothing in a very few Words.*  
 We have seen the direct Opposition that immo-  
 ral Practices bear to the fundamental  
 Interests of the Gospel, and to every reason-  
 able Expectation of those who are willing  
 to be saved by it. *Let us therefore cast off*  
*the Works of Darkness, and let us put on*  
*the Armour of Light*; remembering that  
 Destruction will be the End of all ungodly  
 Men, who turn the Grace of God into  
 Lasciviousness. And what does this De-  
 struction mean? Not that Paradise of Fools,  
 a State of Annihilation, but everlasting De-  
 struction from the Presence of the Lord, and  
 from the Glory of his Power, when he shall  
 be revealed from Heaven with his mighty  
 Angels, to be glorified in his Saints, and to  
 be admired in all them that believe, and in  
 flaming Fire to take Vengeance on them that  
 know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our  
 Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. i. 7—11.  
 Publick and solemn Administrations of Jus-  
 tice naturally strike the Mind with Awe  
 and Terror; and no Man on such Occa-  
 sions can hear the Sentence of Death come  
 forth from the Mouth of an earthly Judge



without feeling such Impressions, as will make him fearful of the Day. There are any Images to be taken of that Day, that can fully represent it, as it is, and solemnity of that Day; when God is surrounded with his heavenly Host, and comes forth to judge the World; and when all People, Nations, and Languages, summoned by his dreadful Voice, shall appear in one grand Assembly before him; to receive each Man his Doom, the Good to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them, and the Bad to be thrown down headlong into that fiery Gulf, which is prepared for the Devil and his Angels! We never can but once have the Experience what it is to fall into the Hands of the living God; but from lesser things we may make some Estimate of greater; and it is certain, that the dullest Imagination can frame no Idea of the great Day of Accounts, that will not rise incomparably higher, than the very warmest Sentiments we can feel from the Experience of any thing of the like sort that we see and know about us. It is for this Reason that bad Men obstinately shut their Eyes against it. They cannot bear the Sight of it. And if

by



by the same Act they could tye up the Hands of Justice, and defeat the Purposes of God, there might be some Sense in it. But what say you? Will you blind-fold yourself and be dashed in Pieces, because you cannot stand the Shock of the dreadful Precipice that lies before you, which if you would but suffer yourself to see, it would make you keep your Distance and prevent the Mischief! Assuredly the Design of Providence (and a gracious Design it is) in opening to us the End of bad Men, is to *warn* us of our Danger, that, *knowing the Power of his Wrath*, we may order our Steps aright. Happy for us if these Warnings will suffice, and we will not delay to be convinced till it is too late to *take* Warning; and *that Experience* which alone will *convince* us, *determines* our State to Misery without Redemption.

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